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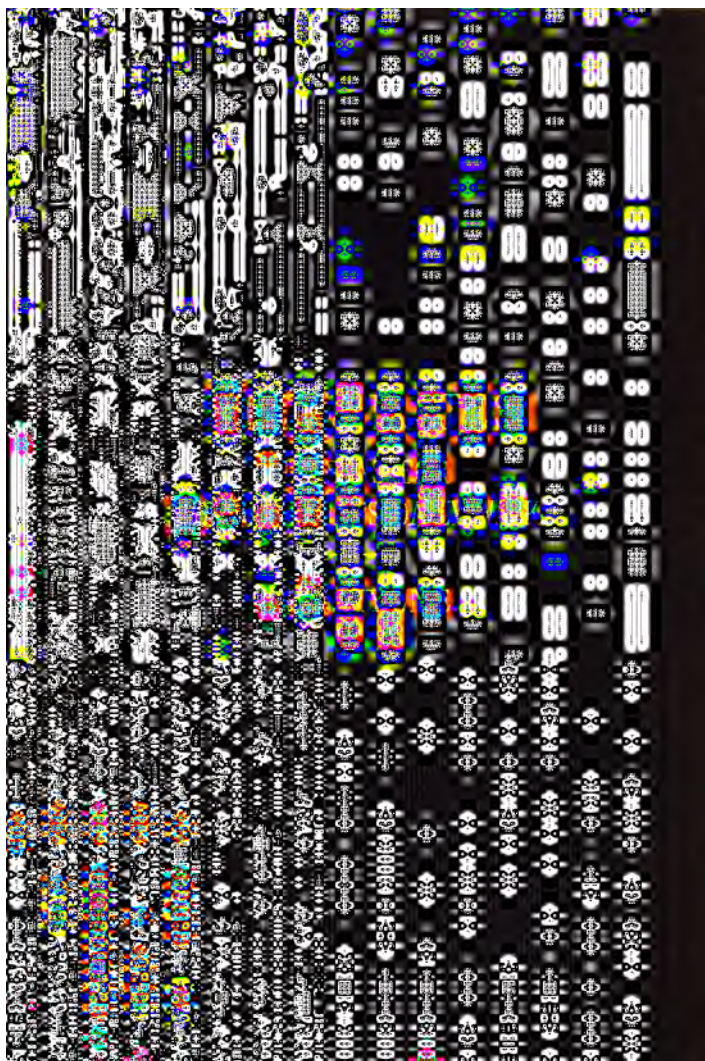
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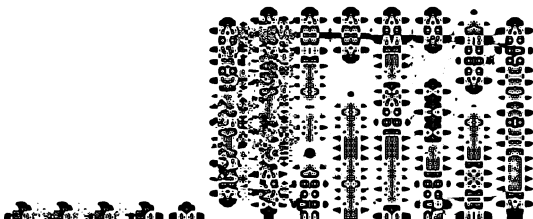
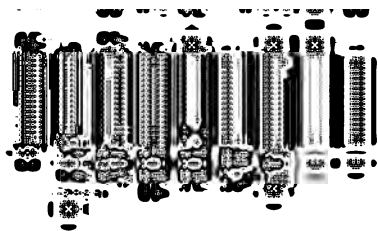
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**ECCLESIASTES.**



# ECCLESIASTES;

OR,

## LESSONS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY WALK.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "INTERCESSORY PRAYER, ITS DUTIES AND  
EFFECTS;" "FEAR NOT;" "FAMILY PRAYER," ETC.

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*"I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment."*

—ECCL. VIII. 2.

SOLOMON preached loyalty,—that every soul be subject to the higher powers, and "all the ordinances of man" be kept, as unto God. (Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13.) But, doubtless, Solomon looked higher than to earthly laws, and, by "the King's commandment," meant *the Law of God*. This was the statute book to Israel—their only code, alike for spiritual and earthly rule. But *who* could keep this holy law? *None* ever kept it; none keeps it now; and no man ever will. It asks for perfectness, which none can yield; it claims a penalty, which all must pay. (Gal. iii. 10, 11.) "*Do this, and thou shalt live,*" the precept ran. (Luke x. 28.) Where none could do it, 'twas plain that none could live. 'Twas but a law of death. 'Twas only given to prove man's inability—to be a school-master to lead to Christ. (Rom. v. 13; vii. 13; Gal. iii. 19—24.) Such was the King's commandment. Then *what* did Solomon mean, by telling us to keep what never could be kept? By faith he pointed to the *types*,—the dying goat, the bleeding lamb; through them he pointed to the Saviour, the Lamb of God. *Jesus* on Sinai sat (Acts vii. 38; comp. v. 30—32), from thence He gave the law,—"*Do this, and thou shalt live.*" (Lev. xviii. 5.) But from the Cross a new commandment came, "*Believe, and live!*" Henceforth this was to be the law of life and death. *Believe, and live; believe*

*not*, thou shalt *die*. (John iii. 18, 19, 36; xvi. 9; Mark xvi. 16.) The Jews had asked, "What shall we *do*, that we might work the works of God?" (John vi. 28.) They wished to find some royal road to keep the law, and thus to save their souls. Jesus replied, "*Believe* on Him whom He hath sent." (Ver. 29.) The reason is plain. Christ kept the law; Christ paid the penalty. Believe on Christ, and then thou art one with Him; thy sins are His; His righteousness is thine. Christ kept the law. Not for Himself He kept it, but for *thee*; that thou, in faith, might say, "I have kept it too,—in Christ I have paid the penalty." And thus the two commandments meet in one. Am I in Christ, I have kept them both. "Do this, and live!" In Christ I've kept it. "Believe, and live!" Through grace I've kept it too.

The new command includes the old; hence all its virtue; it destroys not, but fulfils. (Matt. v. 17.) Yet know, my friend, 'tis not in thee to keep even this new commandment. This were as hard as to fulfil the old. To us 'tis "*given*" "to believe,"—faith is the *gift* of God. (Phil. i. 29; Eph. ii. 8.) Could'st thou, of self, believe, grace were no longer grace. Obedience to the faith must come from God, that He be all in all.

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"*And that in regard of the oath of God.*"—

ECCL. VIII. 2.

THE old command was binding. Israel had pledged themselves to keep it. (Ex. xix. 8.)

'Twas binding as an *oath*; 'twas sealed by *blood*; a *covenant* 'twixt God and man,—*God* bound to recompense obedience, and to punish sin; *man* bound to keep the law, or suffer for it. Thus man had bound upon himself his own destruction; for who could keep the covenant he had made? No *formal* oath had been expressed either by God or man, but *virtually* both had sworn. The *better covenant*, the new command, had better promises. With *it* man, in his sinfulness, had nought to do. *God* in His unity (Gal. iii. 20),—the Three in One,—devised, contracted, and performed. The parties were the Father and the Son; God the eternal Father; and God in man—Immanuel—the man Christ Jesus; each party pledged; each able to perform; each qualified to covenant with each other, since each alike incapable of change. The *Spirit* heard. (John xvi. 13.) The covenant was *His*, in common with the Father and the Son. He pledged Himself, as well as They, to call, to cherish, and to keep, the heirs of glory. This covenant was ratified by *oath*. God swore to *Abraham*. (Gen xxii. 16.) He swore to *David*. (Psa. lxxxix. 35.) Before the worlds He swore to *Abraham's seed*, and *David's Son* (Psa. cx. 4), "whose goings forth" had been "from everlasting." (Mic. v. 2.) This *oath* was made to assure "the heirs of promise," that they might know God's certainty of purpose (Heb. vi. 17), and, through the comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. (Rom. xv. 4.) God's word is passed, His *oath* is given, that all His Church shall live. To Christ He gave

His chosen ones. (John xvii. 6.) By *oath* they are His. By *oath* He calls, by *oath* He keeps them; by *oath* He promises to give them grace; by *oath* He is pledged to give them glory. With men "an oath for confirmation" ends the strife. (Heb. vi. 16.) When *God* has *sworn*, say, Who shall doubt His word? He says, "*Believe, and live!*"—God sware in promise; yet *once* He *sware* in *wrath*, that sinners should not see His rest, (Psa. xcv. 11.) And why? Because of "unbelief." (Heb. iii. 19.) This oath is *still* in force; the King's command is doubly fenced; salvation pledged by *oath* to all the saints; eternal death denounced by *oath* on unbelievers. Believe, and live; believe not, and be damned. (John iii. 36; Mark xvi. 16.) God's word is fixed; His oath is passed; for ever sure, in heaven, in earth, in hell. The Lord hath spoken. Who will not fear? The Lord hath sworn. Who will not be afraid? Hear His command: *Believe, and live!* No terror *then* His oath inspires. 'T will be the ground of all thy hopes, the comfort of thy soul.

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"*Be not hasty to go out of His sight.*"—

ECCLES. VIII. 3.

IF earthly monarchs claim respect, and courtly manners are required of those who serve them, much more is kingly honour due to Him, who made the world, and rules it. That man should have fellowship with God! Oh, what a mystery! The mystery, however, is scarcely

less, that, with the privilege, man should forget the majesty of Him, with whom he has to do—*One*, among other courtly rules, is to retire backwards from the throne—ever to turn the face to him that sits upon it, and not to go unbidden from the kingly presence. Shall lesser deference be paid to *God*, the *King of kings*? If reverence is due on coming to His presence, is it not due on leaving it? Should we not wait the beck of His dismissal? If He have more to say, shall we be loth to hear, or slight the honour of His condescension? Can time be better spent? Can we so soon exhaust the royal bounty? Before thou rise, let it be told thee by the Spirit, “’Tis time to go!” He will not let thee be a loser, if thou thus confide Him.—Quit not the throne too suddenly. Slide not at once from prayer to earthly things. Resume not hastily the thread of occupation. Be slow to act upon a thought that struck you as you went to prayer,—while in the very act of kneeling down; this would encourage thought to come again unseasonably.—If you have left the friendly circle, that you may pray, beware lest fond excitement flutter you the while, tempt you to hurry your devotions, and mar your intercourse with God.—If interrupted in your prayer, and called away to do some needful thing, go cheerfully. In any wise, be not provoked with him who thus, unwittingly, I trow, disturbed you. If able to resume your prayer, you’ll find it has not suffered by the shock. If not, God knows your mind. Be still,—He’ll give thee audience at another time.—

In social worship, 'tis unedifying to engage in secular discourse the moment you are risen from your knees; forthwith to take a public journal, or other reading of the kind; to give an order to your servant; or make engagements for the day. Better allow a space to intervene (be it however short) while you retire backwards from the throne; and, ere you leave the royal ante-room, have time to say, "Lord, look upon thy servant, he is going now to meet the world; *be with him still*. Pardon his want of reverence, and, as he leaves the throne, *be with him still!*" Such rules are needful. They seem the "*little things*" of grace, but they are great in deed. If followed out, they keep the mind more able for devotion, and make it taste "the powers of the world to come." (Heb. vi. 5.) The closer company you have kept with Jesus, the more you have prayed in spirit; the slower you will be to turn to worldly things; the more devoutly you'll retire from the throne. The more the eye has gazed upon the sun, the more the earth will be a blank to look upon. Such tests are wholesome. By these we try the tone of our devotions, the nature of our fellowship with God.

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*"Stand not in an evil thing; for He doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him."*—ECCL. VIII. 3.

HAD Lot remained in Sodom, or lingered in the plain, he must have perished in his folly. Then "*stand not*," sinner, in thine evil ways. The Lord is full of power. He does whate'er

He will. He can e'en take thee at a stroke, or give thee over to a hardened heart.—And thou, *Believer*, wast *thou* not in the Preacher's mind, when thus he spake? "The wise man *fearth*, and *departs from evil*." (Prov. xiv. 16.) This is the wisdom of the saints. Tarry not in temptation,—flee quickly from it. Think of "Lot's wife," nor look behind.—Thou find'st thyself in front of some forbidden thing; it comes invitingly—unasked—unsought for. Thou seemest almost *privileged* to look, to hear, to dwell upon it. Flesh pleads entreatingly, and hints that "*Providence*" has put it in thy way. And so it did; yet not to tempt thee into sin. As said a minister of God, long since departed, the door was opened that thou might'st shut it, not to invite thine entrance; and God permits these trials of thy faith, to prove thy faithfulness. Be stern, then, with thyself. Sin cannot lose its sinfulness, however plausible it be. Flesh is still flesh, and must be crucified. Grace is still grace, and grace must have its way.—Again, some duty presses, and time is short; a hurried step carries you swiftly on. You meet a friend; "you have not time to stop." You see a crowd. What is that crowd to thee? But vain curiosity comes in; you stop to see, and slight the secret warning, "*What dost thou here?*"—Or else some novelty attracts thee,—some book or print, set there on purpose to entrap the passers by. How charming to the enemy to see thee stop; to find thee standing "in an evil thing;" to catch thee mixing with the multitude, wasting



the time in vanity!—"Tis dangerous to walk abroad in scenes of vanity, with nought to do. You are sure to meet with evil,—something to look at, which you should not see; something to hear, to which you should not listen. On principle, 'tis well to hurry on, steadily, if thou can'st not rapidly. Loungers are ever wrong; for them mischief is aye in store. Life is a journey through a land of foes. "Haste for thy life!" must still thy motto be. Haste for consistency! Haste for thy purity! Hasten for thy peace! To tarry, mostly, is to go astray. *Forward* in grace! *Forward* in thought! *Forward* in occupation! *Forward* e'en in thy daily walks! No time hast thou to tarry,—no time to waste,—no time to stand. Then, Christian, *forward*—aye, *forward* go!

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"Who may say unto Him, What doest thou?"—

ECCL. VIII. 4.

"WHERE the word of a King is, there is power." (Ver. 4.) What word, what power, are like the *Lord's*? With *earthly* kings words may be loud, and power small. Days, months, or years, may intervene before the power fulfils the word, and makes it sure. Not so with God. His purpose knows no hindrance. His Word can never fail. Who can resist His power? With God, purpose, and word, and power are but one. Past, present, and the future, are all the same to Him; they form but one iota of eternal being,—but one unbroken surface of

identity. "*Who*," then, "may say to God, *What doest thou?*" To intercept His purpose, thou must have lived from all eternity; been born before the actings of His will forbade the Word, and thus have foiled His power. Infinite, unchangeable, Almighty,—with God, to *will* is to perform; to *speak* is to proclaim His past eternal purpose, and His endless might. Who may arrest His hand, or thwart His providence? Who *may*? That is not the word. Rather, who *ought to wish* it? Who ought to quarrel with His will, or say, either with bold or fretful opposition, "*What doest thou?*"—Thy child is taken; mayhap the shipwreck has bereft thee, at a stroke, of *all* thy family; or other ills untold, unspeakable, have made thee drink the wine of desperation. My friend, these things were purposed from "before the worlds." In God's eternal mind 'twas written,—'twas settled long ago. (How vain to say, "*What doest thou?*") And when the time was come, God sent His messengers—noiseless, unseen, invisible—to do His righteous will. Could'st thou have said, "*What dost thou* with my child? *What dost thou* with the winds and waves?—forbear!" Ere it was known, 'twas done. Before thou heardest it, it came to pass. Thy will was not consulted,—thy leave not asked. Thou can'st not say, "*What doest thou?*" Say not, "*What hast thou done?*" Be dumb, and say, "I opened not my mouth, because thou *didst* it." (Psa. xxxix. 9.) "What shall I say? He hath both spoken to me, and *Himself has done it.*" (Isa. xxxviii. 15.) Go softly all thine

years,—yet not “in bitterness of soul.” If thou hast faith in Christ, thou art better taught than this. Go softly,—yet in faith, in patience. Looking to Jesus; let thy language be, “*It is the Lord!* Let my Lord *do* what seems Him good.” (1 Sam. iii. 18.)

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“*A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.*”—ECCLES. VIII. 5.

THERE is a book more difficult to read than human “works,” however hard they be; a language harder to decypher than all the dialects of human speech. It is the book of “*time and judgment*,”—the volume of God's dealings with the sons of men; to read His doings and observe His ways. (Psa. cvii. 43.) In times of public trouble, or domestic woe, 'tis easy to “afflict the soul,” and, as a bulrush in the wind, to bow the head; to wear the garb of sorrow; and to throng the “churches” on the solemn “fast.” (Isa. lviii. 5.) All this is done, and yet the soul discerns not “*time and judgment*.” Outward distress it sees; it feels the chastening; yet it cannot see the call to penitence, and faith, and prayer,—to think of judgment, and the world to come. Purblind is man—hopelessly blind, till grace enlighten him. “Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they *will not see*.” Thus spake the prophet,—thus speaks the prophet still. (Isa. xxvi. 11.) Nor is it mere acquaintance with prophetic lore; to know the dates and systems of inter-

preters; to say "The times are threatening; the end is approaching; the Lord is at hand!" My friend, is Jesus precious to your soul? Do you expect His *coming*, because "you love His *cross*?" Do you "hold" the former resurrection (Rev. xx.), because in soul and practice you *now* are *risen* with Christ? (Col. iii. 1.) Do you in righteousness, soberness, and godliness,—in deep conviction of your sin,—in heartfelt yearning for the souls of men, look "*for that blessed hope*?" (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) Oh, this is wisdom! Oh, this is to discern "*both time and judgment*;" to read God's dealings, as He means them; of every lifting of His hand to feel your soul aware; your heart responding to His providence, as pulse to pulse! If so, you are like the men of Issachar,—"*men that had understanding of the times*, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. xii. 32.) 'Tis well to read God's dealings with yourself. You may have found, by past experience, that He has a special method with you; that some events bespeak a certain train of providence concerning you; that certain workings of the Spirit foretel a certain state of soul; that certain throbs of conscience, ere this, were calls to listen to the Spirit for some especial purpose; that certain risings in the inner man have told of coming conflict, and fierce temptation, near at hand; that sudden softenings of heart have been the sure forerunners of contrition—deep, solemn, and refreshing; that godly yearnings have been but drops before a shower of prayerful influences, long continued. If so,

in this discern "*both time and judgment.*" Let not experience be lost upon you, but make the present profit by the past.

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"*For he knoweth not that which shall be ; for who can tell him when it shall be ?*"—ECCL. VIII. 7.

God's purposes have all their seasons of fulfilment. His judgments, each its time of visitation. Mapped out in clear perspective, thine every dispensation was fixed from everlasting in the eternal mind. Thy sunny seasons, and thy cloudy days ; sorrow and pain, anxiety and want, thine every loss of property or friends ; all was designed or e'er thou sawest the light. Trials may be in store, the thoughts of which would harrow up thy soul,—so thick that, were thy lifetime like Methuselah's, thy troubles would be more than ordinary men's. All this is seen and known to God : *what* it may be, or *when* it is to come, He tells not to His creatures. As lightning shines,—for *quickness* ; as wave comes after wave,—for *frequency* ; so may they visit thee. Uncertain as the wind,—yet fixed in purpose, and in performance sure,—anon they come. From day to day, from hour to hour, who can foretel his future ? "*Therefore,*" the Preacher says, "*the misery of man is great upon him*" (ver. 6). Reader, is this thy feeling ? Is "*therefore*" misery great on *thees* ? Does it make thee brood o'er possibilities,—alarmed at the contingency of woes ? Would'st thou that all were known before, that

thou might'st be prepared for what may come? Rather thank God that He has veiled the future, and deals His dispensations one by one,—the time, the way, the kind, the circumstance, fixed by unerring wisdom, and by boundless love. 'Tis thus God's will is glorified; His power felt; His sovereignty known. Free from the trammels of His creatures' will; matchless in skill; unfailing in resource,—He thus proclaims His Godhead. Known to His children are the ways of God. The world may murmur, but the saints submit. The world may tremble, but the saints are glad. In all their woes a Father's hand they see—a Saviour's sympathy. They would not alter it. They meekly leave the future to their God. The times and seasons; the "*what*;" the "*when*;" the "*how*;" the "*why*;" they would not, dare not, know. *One* thing they know,—that as their days, so their strength shall be; that He, who tells the stars, and calls them by their names, will heal the broken-hearted; He bindeth up their wounds (Deut. xxxiii. 25; Psalm cxlvii. 3);—that comforts shall keep pace with sorrows, and grace suffice for every time of need.

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*"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death."*—ECCLES. VIII. 8.

*Who* can explain the facts, detail the laws, or search the wonders, of the world of *spirits*? A portion of that very world dwells in each unit of the human race. Man, now for twice

three thousand years, or nigh, has had to do with it; yet knows as little of it as he did at first. *What* is the *soul* of man? A spirit. *Whence* came it? From the world of spirits. And *whither* goes it? To the world of spirits. That is all *he* knows, and that is small indeed. He can't explain *how* spirit dwells with flesh,—*what* binds the two together, for a time, in perfect unity. He has never *seen*, as little can he *feel*, the links that knit them to each other. 'Tis all *within* him,—his flesh, his spirit, his life, his being,—all the machinery of soul and body, thus closely interlaced. Yet 'tis as foreign to his grasp, as that which happens in another world. *Thus* flesh and spirit dwell together. Who could suppose they e'er would part again! Who can explain *how* soul and body part, or how the links of union are undone—what makes the spirit fly away, or how the flesh gives up its hold! God wills; God does it; God says not *why*; God tells not *how*. He speaks, unheard; 'tis seen, 'tis done. Man may detain the body; he cannot stay the soul, nor say, "Thou shalt not go!" God says, "Return!" The word must be obeyed. Nor youth, nor wit, nor beauty, can delay His hand. How wonderful is death! At times how violent! At times how stealthy! At times he takes your darling from your side,—robs you before your face unblushingly. At other times, days, months, and years may intervene before you know it. The spirit fled; you knew it not. You thought it still on earth; 'twas gone. You think of him, prepare for him, and write

to him. Alas! the spirit is gone; and hadst thou known it, what couldst thou have done! Oh, vanity of vanities! What pain, what misery, man's sin has brought to pass! And yet how wonderful the ignorance, the recklessness of fallen man! Thrice dead in spiritual death, he neither knows nor seeks a remedy, but binds his misery around him with thoughtless energy. And yet there is a remedy—a remedy in *Jesus*,—a remedy for those who look to *Jesus*,—for those, whose friends are gone to be with *Jesus*. Say, Reader, can you look around you, can you look backward or forward—and be happy, unless you find this remedy for all the misery, uncertainty, and care of this poor, passing world?

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*"And there is no discharge in that war."*—

ECCL. VIII. 8.

OH, what a *war* it is! On one side all is death; on the other all is victory. Since Adam's day the war is carried on; no respite granted, no peace, no armistice, and no exchange of prisoners. Each moment of the day are thousands slain; each moment of the night. Each one is carried off in turn, but none come back again; "*there is no discharge!*" Some have been prisoners for centuries, and tens of centuries, fast bound in chains of death. *As yet* there is *no discharge!* Parents have seen their children snatched away; *none* have returned again; wives torn from husbands, husbands from wives, and friends from friends; there's



no exception, "*no discharge.*" Oh, death, thou art the conqueror now! Some fear thee; others brave thee (ver. 8, end); still more forget thee; but all alike fall under thee. Thou takest some ere life is scarce begun. E'en *them* thou bringest not again; "*there's no discharge!*" Some are removed in bloom of youth—in beauty's prime—in midst of usefulness. Death, art thou not mistaken? Was not thy stroke intended for another? Oh, give them back! Alas! "*there is no discharge!*"—How many a veteran we have seen, "green" in his years! We loved to think how long he still might live. We gave him still, of years, full half-a-score. But no! He is taken; "*there is no discharge!*"—What anguish in the thought, "*He'll ne'er return!*" Fancy can hardly take it in. Each "mail" you think to see his well-known "hand." Each opening door seems opened for his form to enter! Alas! "*there is no discharge!*" As YET there is none. But will there *never* be? "There is no discharge!" Death, say not so. *One day* thou'lt see it. As all have gone, all will return: as all have died, so all will live again. Oh, death, thou art doomed. "The lake of fire" is kept for *thee*. (Rev. xx. 14.) Thou art fairly conquered. The wicked e'en are taken from thy grasp. They rise again,—to misery, 'tis true; yet *still* they *live*. Oh, death! they are not *thine*. But, those who have died in *faith*!—it is not death; they *sleep* in *Jesus*. They wait the appointed time. Their "change" will come. Their Lord shall

speak, and they will answer. He'll not forget them, nor leave them in the dust of death. (Job xiv. 14, 15.) "*Where*," then, "thy sting," O Death? "O grave," "*where*," then, "thy victory!" O Death, thy war is at an end; not now, but then; and *then*, O Death, "there is *no discharge*" for thee!

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"*There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.*"—ECCL. VIII. 9.

AUTHORITY is sweet, but dangerous. Misrule is hurtful, not only to the ruled, but to the ruler. History is full of it; but, Reader, what have you and I, just now, to do with *History*? There is something that concerns us all more nearly. Are you the *Father* of a family? Do you rule them for your profit, or your hurt? Do you mark their tempers, and their dispositions? Are your instructions suited to their characters; your chastenings well adjusted to their sensibilities? In their infirmities see you *your own* reflected? What *they* are now, in youth and childhood such were *you*. Do you remember *this*,—that they derive their nature all from *thee*?—Are love and firmness mingled in thy rule: love tempered by discretion, and firmness joined to love? How many parents err,—Christian, well-meaning parents! They forget the Bible rule—the rod they spare. 'Tis meant in love; 'tis hatred in effect. (Prov. xiii. 24.) *God* rules his sons by chastening. He sends what makes them *feel*, in *mind* and *body* too. Can *you* do better

with your child, than God with *His*? Are children different now? Is the Preacher's discipline grown out of date? In infancy a thousand lectures, loving though they be, fall short of bodily correction, duly administered in season, and degree. 'Tis what the child can *feel* and understand. *This* is the simplest mode of teaching; *this*, the end in view.—If you rule your child in anger, you teach him to be angry in his turn. One day his anger will recoil on *you*. The same with peevishness, and fretful speech; 'twill only make them fretful with *thyselves*; thou rul'st them to *thy hurt*.—If thou, a parent, deceive thy partner, and thus screen the child, thy child one day will practise fraud on *thee*. Thou *rul'st* him to *thy hurt*.—Strike not a child in haste. Is he to be chastened? Then go to prayer, that thou be kept from anger, and that God would teach thy child, and nurture him with grace. I knew a father once. I never shall forget his way. He was a tender parent, and keenly felt his children's failings. He ne'er o'erlooked their faults, but when he chastened them, 'twas done in *love*. I well remember the anguish of his look. He showed his children that it tore his heart to chasten them. 'Thus, in the father's grief, the children read their faults, and saw how bitter, and how ill it was to disobey.

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“ *There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.*”—ECCL. VIII. 9.

ARE you the *Master* of a household? Do you

rule your *servants* well? What wisdom do you show—what sense of justice, in your family? Do you respect the covenant you made? 'Twas as much implied, that *you* should rule with meekness and forbearance, as that *they* should serve you well. Bear you in mind that they are flesh and blood, as well as you? No difference in this respect 'twixt them and thee; feelings to work upon; failings to be studied; affections to be pleased or wounded; all *this* they have in common with thyself. How much is this forgotten in the stern realities of service! Yet God, who made the one, has made the other, too. With Him there is no respect of persons. Will He not mark thy lack of feeling?—Do you choose the season well for *telling them their faults*? How much depends on *this*! How oft we rule them to our injury by neglecting it! If faults come thickly, yet reprove them not in quick succession; they will not bear it, and you will thus defeat your end. *One* fault corrected at a time goes further than twenty told at once. If one reproof be taken meekly, the next may overstrain the patience, and the third produce a storm. On *whom* recoils the blow? *Who* feels it most? The master or the servant? Thou knowest full well.—Let not reproof succeed the fault too quickly. The sense of having erred ruffles the mind. It's then less open to reproof, when fresh from erring. *Forbear a while*. You'll find your opportunity. Their hearts, like yours, are in the hand of God. Commit your

cause to Him, and lean not on yourself, your warnings and expostulations.—Does your servant answer you in rudeness? You are justly grieved. This tries the patience, and grates upon the feelings, most severely. “To think that he so far forgets himself! Had an equal thus insulted me, ’twere more easily endured, but *from a servant*, ’tis intolerable!” But is not this a cause to bear with him more patiently? Inferior station argues an inferior sensibility—inferior knowledge of what is right, or wrong—coarse or becoming—vulgar or refined. Your station makes you doubly sensitive, while he is tenfold liable to err. Judge of his fault with calmness, remembering yourself, your failings, your advantages. Mayhap you have erred yourself, as he has done. (Eccl. vii. 21, 22.) In any wise, let not his anger anger you, nor tempt you to exceed propriety. ’Tis bad enough in him; ’twere tenfold worse in *you*.—What do you for the *souls* of those, who serve you? Do you speak to them of *Jesus*, and the world to come? If not, how can you rule them well? Church privilege is good; so is domestic worship; but let not these supplant your faithfulness. Speak to them for yourself,—nought can excuse you; tell them yourself of what concerns their peace.—Servants have *eyes and ears*. They mark your words, observe your ways, and see your inconsistencies. How can you rule them to your profit, if your deeds belie your principles?—Would you make them punctual,

be punctual yourself; example teaches more than precept. With all your care, your patience will be tried; but how much more, if you neglect to rule them well!

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“*So I saw the wicked buried.*”—ECCL. VIII. 10.

OH, what a leveller is *death*! All die, and all are buried; the grave has no respect of persons. Some rest in hope. After their “skin” the worms destroy their body, yet their Redeemer lives; in time they will see Him face to face. (Psalm xvi. 9; Job xix. 25—27.) With other some how *different*! They lived in sin; in sin they died. Their sins lie with them in the dust, and rest upon their bones. (Job xx. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 27.) And yet they seemed to die in peace. Because their face looked pleasantly in death, ’tis said that all was well. Oh, what a broken reed! Rest not upon it. ’Twill only pierce the hand that leans upon it. Thou, too, may’st have a smile upon thy lifeless corpse. What then? Think you that this will cancel sin, and save thy soul? The only safety is in Jesus and His cross. Nought else will serve thee in a dying day.

And then the *funeral*, with all its circumstance of woe! The sable hearse; the nodding plumes; horses caparisoned with studied care; attendants numerous—some heralding in front, some following;—with *men of high degree*, the escutcheon on the house—the coronet on the bier—the mausolæum cold in its marbled symmetry; with *all* (or high or low) the ser-

vice solemnly performed,—“ashes to ashes,” “dust to dust,” so reverently given! How hard to think that any, thus interred, have failed of heaven! Nature repels the thought. “It cannot be! ’Twere sacrilege to doubt their safety.” Thus man takes refuge from unpleasant truth in dark solemnities; and clothes the trappings of mortality—the crowning emblems of his sin and shame—with thoughts of universal safety. How vain the pomp, how false the pride, oft shown on such occasions! Look at that funeral! You knew him well by sight; you often met him, exchanged a nod, or passing word, or stopped to speak to him. *Then* he passed on, unnoticed, unattended;—no show, or vain display had marked his doings. You see him *now*; at least you see his pageant. More horses draw him to the tomb than he was wont to sit behind, when living. Had you ne’er seen the like before, you would ask what peer, or man of note he was. Thus men are borne as princes to the grave, who, in their life, had nothing princely. ’Tis well to reverence the dead, and solemnly commit them to the tomb; yet not to make it an excuse for vanity. Think what it is to *die*! Think of the great realities that follow. Think of the mouldering *dust*; how little *it* can feel the empty honours thus bestowed upon it! Think of the parted *spirit*; how is it bettered by the pomp and show? Think of the lowly Jesus, and let thy pride be buried in thy brother’s grave.

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"*They were forgotten.*"—ECCL. VIII. 10.

How well we knew his person, both in the haunts of business, and the house of prayer! \* His place was not "itself" without him. It was a shock to hear that he was gone. It brought him to our mind more forcibly than ever. Slight friendship swelled at once to feelings of intensity. Each seemed as though he had lost an intimate acquaintance. Excitement lingered for a day, or two. Before his burial it seemed to wane; then suddenly shot up again; flared for a little season, and *then*—expired! How soon he was *forgotten*! E'en thus it fares with men of great renown—statesmen, "high captains," or public benefactors. Long as they *lived*, the nation watched their doings. They could not walk abroad, or reach their country seat, but it was read by thousands. What mourning when they *died*! And yet *how soon* were they *forgotten*!—Ah! when we hear the sobs of parents suddenly bereft; of widows, orphans, brothers, sisters, friends—disconsolate in woe, we say, can *they* forget! Ah yes, they may and *do*! Like marble fretwork, memory pays tribute to the lapse of time, and parts with all its tracery. Yet 'tis not *always* so. In *some* memory is made of stronger stuff; the stream of retrospective love flows deep, though silently. Absent from sight, their cherished ones are often in their mind. *We* men of fainter feelings must stand abashed before them, and own them greater than our-

\* "*The place of the holy.*" See text.



selves. — *What* makes the difference 'twixt *memory* and *memory*; 'twixt man and man? *Wherein* consists the framework of the mind? *How* is it put together? *What* makes affection strong, or weak? *What* causes the predominance of judgment, feeling, frailty, or of power? Known unto God are all His works; He has not told us *why*. Man's memory has shared the fate of all that is human; it is now degraded by infirmity, and spoiled by sin! But *this* we know, God *ne'er* forgets His people. E'en living *saints* forget departed ones; *Jesus* forgets *them* not. Midst sin, and imperfection they never lose His love, His thought, His care; and when they leave this mortal scene, and fade from human memory, they are not a whit more present to His mind than formerly. *His* memory knows *no change*.

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"Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily."—ECCL. VIII. 11.

"IN the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 17.) Thus spake the Lord to *Adam*. Yet *Adam* ate, and *Adam* *did not die*. 'Tis true that *moral* death ensued at once, in strict fulfilment—death physical was still delayed. Year followed year, and age succeeded age—yet *Adam* *died not*. Nine centuries had passed—*still Adam lived!* How slowly judgment came! Yet *Adam* died at *last*. (Gen. v. 5.) With God 'twas but a day. With Him a thousand years are but as yesterday gone by, or as an evening watch. (Ps.

xc. 4.)—For sixscore years the *flood* descended not; for sixscore years the world defied the sentence; for sixscore years God's patience waited, while the ark was made; yet judgment came *at last*. (Gen. vi. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 20.) Since *then*, all things continue as they were; yet judgment only *tarrys*, it is not gone by. *Christ* says, "*I come again!*" Yet *still* 'tis said, "*Where* is the promise of His coming?" God's promise is not slack; He suffers long, that men may turn and live. Yet still they scorn His grace; and man is wayward, since the Lord is kind. (2 Pet. iii. 3—9; Rom. ii. 4.)—Of all God's attributes, methinks, *long suffering* is the chief. Infinite sense of evil, with infinite *forbearance*! How wonderful! The mystery of power, (Num. xiv. 17, 18) thus set forth, is quite unsearchable by mortal minds. Impatience (and what art thou, my soul, but this!), impatience hides its eyes; it cannot gaze upon the glory of God's *forbearance*.—But *why* is God so patient? Willing to show His wrath, and make His power (*avenging* power) known, *why* does He yet *forbear*? The cause is plain—to show the riches of His glory on the vessels of His grace. (Rom. ix. 22, 23.) *The Book of Life* unfolds the mystery. Traced on its page—written indelibly in truth and love—God reads the chosen names. The time is noted for their birth and calling. The world must last, and judgment tarry, till the last name is called—the family made up—the flock completed.—My soul, how wonderful that God has borne with *thee*! That *thou* should'st

know His grace! And share his love! His patience thou hast tried—His purpose proved, by manifold transgressions. Say, with *how many* sinners has He borne, that *thou*, the chief of sinners, might become the least of saints? Then hide thy head, and call thyself the chief of sinners *still*.

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*“Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, &c.”—ECCL. VIII. 12, 13.*

MEN live and die. They *call* it life and death, and so it is. But yet *this* life, and death are purely physical—*breath* dwelling in the man, or *breath* departed. *True* life is something more than this. Its source and centre is in God. 'Tis but an emanation from Himself—a streamlet from the fount of self-existence—a radiance from the light of godly being. The life of God is, like Himself, holy, and just, and good. No other life but *this* could God impart. While life retains this character, 'tis life itself; what it was meant to be; containing in itself the impress of the Holy One, Himself the sole epitome of life. True life infers God's presence and His love; the pure enjoyment of His favour. Peace, holiness, and purity, are but the breath of such existence. God's countenance, and light are but the air it breathes. Without these properties life physical is death, however long it lasts. Long life, in fallen beings, is but a

death prolonged, no mark of blessing or of God's complacency. By heavenly rules, how can a fallen state, a lifeless life—a covert death—be or a blessing or a boon? The only boon it boasts is that the sinner still is spared, if, by God's blessing, he may learn to count his life but death; and know the principle, and taste the power, of life from heaven. Men deem long life a blessing. They hug their days, and count their opportunities of sin; each moment added to their life is hailed with joy, a respite from the future, dreaded and unknown. But *what* is life? 'Tis but the prelude to *eternity*—the first beginning of an endless end. *What* is eternity, but time prolonged—the after links of one unbroken chain! Our mortal life, without the heavenly birth, is but the day-spring of eternal death. The life of grace, implanted in the soul, is the first breathing of eternal day. Die soon, die late, sure it is well with them, that fear the Lord, who look to Jesus, and revere His name. Die late, die early, *can* it be well with them, who only live to die eternally, because they live *without the Lord*? God give us grace to see aright—to call things by their proper names—and thus to find *death* but the door of *life* and gate of heaven. (See vers. 12, 13.)

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“*There be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked.*”—ECCLES. VIII. 14.

So it has always been. God chastens whom

He loves. Can love be better shown? To bring us to the Cross, and keep us there; to show the vanity of earthly things, and feed the graces of the saints? Say, Christian sufferer, does thine heart rebel, to see the wicked prosper and thyself in woe? Say, wouldst thou *change*? Is he better off than thou? Are his earthly blessings better than thy *grace*? What enuiest thou? His health, his wealth, his power of limb, his aptitude for thought, his friends, attendants, equipage, or home? Is *Jesus*, then, unequal to thy wants, unable for thy cares? Are thy miseries, then, greater than thy mercies? Thy comforts, are they *gone*? What think ye of the honour, that *Jesus* makes thy bed in all thy sickness! He knows thy pains; He counts thy waking hours, thy restless nights, thy tossings to and fro. He never leaves thee; He nurses thee with tender care. Is health unsanctified a greater blessing? Sickness with *Jesus*—or health *without* *Jesus*; *which* is the greater boon?—Thy family is thinned by death. What then? Does not the Saviour fill the void? Is *He* not better than father, mother, husband, wife, or friend? Then envy not the circle where death has been unknown. Thou hast better friends and relatives than they.—Perhaps thy means are low, and changed from what they were. But what is *Jesus*? Is He not more than gold and silver? Is He not more to *thee*? Are the ways of God unequal, because He gives thee *Jesus*! Gives thee His grace, His love, His presence; gives thee *Himself* besides?

Hast thou the *lesser* portion, because thou hast the *Lord*? Then how canst thou complain? Complaint would suit the worlding more than thee—that he has only *time*, and thou *eternity*—that he has earth alone, while you inherit *heaven*. Then envy not the rich, the strong, the prosperous; the man, who knows no weariness in pleasure from morn to night, from night to morning; thou seest not their hearts; thou knowest not their cares; oftentimes their happiness is nought but restlessness; they love not thought; they *dare not* think; they hurry on, because they *dare not* stop. They know not God, they know not Christ. What is their health,—or what their happiness, to *thee*!

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“*The business that is done on the earth . . . all the work of God.*”—ECCL. VIII. 16, 17.

READER, consider well this passage of the Word. You'll find that *both* the clauses of our text are *one* in meaning. “*The work of God!*” What is it? God works in heaven, 'tis true. Angels behold His Majesty. Departed spirits feed upon His glory. In heaven (with reverence I speak) God's work is simple, uniform in kind, and in degree. 'Tis but the maintenance of holiness in sinless beings; the outgoing of His wisdom, love, and power, in one continuous, unresisted stream; glorious in itself, and not less glorious in the glory thus imparted to saints, and angels. But oh, “*the business that is done on the earth!*” “*The work of God,*”

the business of His hand in this poor, fallen world!—How great, how intricate, how various!—Think of the workings of His power e'en in the outward world; the guidance of the seasons, and all the dispensations of the winds and waves; now sent in mercy, now in wrath—or to supply the wants, or chide the failings, of His creatures.—Think of His dealings with the *hearts* of men; the strivings of the Spirit; the calls of Providence; His actings on the conscience in all its prickings, throes, and sensibilities!—Think of the *work of God* in guiding, keeping, chastening, His people; each want considered; each failing studied; grace, comfort, and experience supplied in kind, and season, and degree, fitted to every case; each soul as much the subject of His care, as though the only object of His love. And *yet* the entire body, the universal Church, maintained in order and relation; all knit together and compact, as if it were a single soul; its government complete; its life secure; its members numbered by unerring love; none to be lost—none to be overlooked—none, for the twinkling of an eye, removed from the heart, or mind of Jesus! Oh! *what* a work it is—the *work of God*! Say, who hath known His mind, or been His counsellor! Who taught Him wisdom, that God should be his debtor! (Rom. xi. 33, 34.) The Preacher tried to find it out, to trace its workings, to mark its purpose, to calculate its doings—but all *in vain*; it baffled all his skill. E'en Solomon might study it by night, by day,

(ver. 16), determined to pursue his search : but none, not even Solomon, e'er found out God, or understood His ways. "Worship Him, all ye gods!"

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"No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them."—ECCL. IX. 1.

HE is speaking of "*the righteous and the wise*," of all their circumstances—of all their liabilities to joy or sorrow. "All things come alike to *all*. There is one event to the *righteous* and the *wicked*." (Ver. 2.) God's children know the trials, pains, uncertainties of life, as do the wicked. The saints have no exemption here. "No man, not e'en the righteous, knoweth *or love or hatred* by all that is before them." *What* would the Preacher mean? *Whose* love? *Whose* hatred? Is it the love of *God*? *God's* hatred! God cannot hate His people; He loves, He hates them not. Are these terms employed as *figures*—love, to denote God's smiling dispensations; hatred, to mean His bitter things—His chastenings? Or does it mean *man's* love, and hatred—the "*time* to love, the *time* to hate," as spoken of before? (Eccl. iii. 8.) God may use man's passions, or affections, to chasten, or to soothe His people. Whiche'er it be, the truth is still the same, "The wise," "the righteous," and "their works, are *in the hand of God*." (Ver. 1.) They purpose oft; but who can tell if he shall e'er per-



form? Oft they begin, and never end; their works are all attended with uncertainty. God's visitations stop them. Man's hatred disappoints them; what they intend for 'good, oft ends in evil. Their wisest schemes are brought to nothing. Their brightest prospects fade away. They work in darkness. From day to day they know not what the morrow brings—what means may help, what means may thwart them, human, or divine. Man may pronounce his trials hatred, and his mercies love. But to the *saints* nothing begins, or ends in hatred, as from God. All ends, as it begins—in *love*. Is *man* the instrument? Yet still they see God working by the hand of man. Man hates; God loves. Man persecutes; God overrules. Man means it all for ill; but God still turns it into good. And thus the same event brings "*love*," and "*hatred*," joined in one. God's love, man's hatred thus combine to work unfailing good—untiring mercy, for all who love the Lord.

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*"Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."*—ECCL. IX. 3.

IN life a madman,—a madman still in death! Such, such is man. 'Tis piteous to hear of one, that is born bereft of reason. 'Tis sad to say, "He passed his life in madness,—then he died!" Oh, what a picture of a waste, physical and moral! Dead as a child, a citizen, a brother, long e'er he died,—the very acmé of all that's desolate. Man thinks he is wise.

He looks with pity on the maniac. How little he suspects that he himself is tenfold mad,—not only mad for time ; mad also for eternity ! Madness he brings into the world ; imbibes it with his mother's milk ; learns it at school ; confirms and strengthens it in manhood ; feeds it by all he does ; reads it in books ; finds it in every company ; bears it along in every walk of life ; sleeping or waking—silent or speaking—learned or ignorant ; rich or poor—he is but a maniac still. A madman was his father ; and so his father's father,—*his* father e'en again. Go backwards till you come to Adam ; maniacs were they *all*,—so are his *children* ; and so will be his children's children, even to the end. *Is* he not mad ? What think ye of a man, who backward walks, close on a yawning precipice ? *Is* he not mad ? Does he not earn the name ? And *what* is man ? *What* does he ? He sports with life ; he plays with death ; slumbers above the flames of hell ; defies his Maker and his Judge ; thinks nought of judgment and eternity ; and *thus* he *dies* ! Is it a libel, then, to say, "*He is mad !*" And what comes *after* death ? Comes wisdom *then* ? E'en then will madness *cease* ? *What* wisdom can there be ? "Death and destruction say we have *heard* the *fame* thereof." (Job xxviii. 22.) They *hear* it, but they *have* it *not*. Man then discovers how mad he has been. He sees his madness then, only to know its endless misery. Happy the man who, coming "to himself," resolves once more to seek his Father's house ! (Luke xv. 17, 18.) Yes, "*coming to himself.*" Thus speaks

the parable. I pray you mark the words; they are full of meaning. As though the man had been asleep; or drunk; or mad; or yet had swooned away—unconscious of himself, and all around him. And then, touched by a sudden hand, and sense as suddenly infused, he wakes—*comes to himself* again, and straight he lives, another man. And such is fallen nature; and such is *grace* in its effects. Happy the man, who thus recovers the gift of reason! Happy the man, who sits at Jesus' feet, "*in his right mind,*" and clothed with grace—cured of his madness. Jesus has said the word. The "legion" is cast and gone. The man is a maniac no more. (Luke viii. 35.) Reader, either you are *mad*, or *once* you were. Say, have you looked to Jesus, or are you a madman *still*?

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"*A living dog is better than a dead lion.*"—

ECCL. IX. 4.

THE Preacher's figure is homely; yet how true! The lion *was* a lion, while he *lived*,—king of the forests, first of all the beasts. But now he is *dead*, *what* is he? The *name* of lion, and no more. A living dog is better. Such as he was, such is he *still*—to all intents and purposes, a *dog*! What dog would like to change? And so, a living *beggar* is better than a dead *king*. Some few would rather die a king than live a beggar. Yet, in the main, man clings to life, and would rather live a beggar, than die a king. But, if life be valued for the present

time, much more may it be valued for the world to come. The Preacher gives a *reason* why humble *life* may be preferred to stately *death*. "The living *know* that they shall *die*." (Ver. 5.) Were man but wise,—did he but know the boon, and rightly prize the lengthening of his days, how happy would he be! The dead! *What* can he do? Death is no longer future,—death is come. *What* can he do? Can he prepare for death? The time is past, and preparation gone. Look at him in his "narrow bed!" Say, can he now *repent*? To *Jesus* can he look? Can he for *mercy* cry? What boots his rank, his velvet coffin, and his stately tomb,—his lofty pedigree, and worldwide fame? Died he in unbelief,—say, who would envy him? Who would praise him *then*? (Ver. 5.) No grace in store; no mercy to be found; no prayer to make; no Word of God to read; no promise to be had; hope, hopelessly, for ever, at an end! How wretched! How precious, then, *to live*,—in pain, or poverty, or woe! The living still, through grace, may look to Jesus; trust in His cross for righteousness; may "*turn* and live." Life, *to the last*, is precious,—oh, *how* precious!—if haply grace be found, and pardon sealed! Better (but, oh! how dangerous the state)—better (with reverence I speak it, but in truth)—better to be a *living* profligate, a murderer, a thief, than be a Pharisee in *death*. For *those* there is hope; for *him* there is none. *These* yet may cry, "O Lord, remember me. Remember not my sins. Remember, Lord, thy grace. Remember Jesus

and His blood." *These* yet may "turn and live." But, oh! the man that *died a Pharisee!* Self-righteousness lies with him in the grave. (Job xx. 11.) *Who*, now, can make him "turn and live?"

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"*God now accepteth thy works.*"—ECCL. IX. 7.

THEY works must be "the work of *God*," ere God accept them; works done in faith and prayer, from love to Jesus; works wrought in thee by God the Spirit; works done, not to *procure* salvation, but because salvation is *given*. No other works than these can God accept. Faith lies beneath, and glory crowns, them all. "*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*" The Saviour thus replied, "That ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent." (John vi. 28, 29.) Works, built on this foundation, find grace with God for Jesus' sake. Happy the man that trusts in *Jesus*,—that makes the work of Christ his only hope! His meanest works are then approved; God looks upon them and accepts them all. 'Tis not the ministers of God alone, nor they who live for works of charity. All have not time for this; their calling lies another way. Be it the labour of the spade or plough; the toil of cities, or the work of mines; to serve a counter, or to lift a bale; the driest labour of the head or hands,—in *all* may God be glorified, and God be *found*. For *this* the Preacher bids us "*go*" our "*way*;" to "*eat*" our "*bread* with joy," and "*drink*" our "*wine*" with "*merry heart*." (Ver. 7.) He

says that God "*accepts*" these works. A blessing rests upon the board, where Christ is owned, and God is sought; where meat is taken, not for eating's sake, but that the heart be cheered, and members nourished, that God be served more heartily; where thankfulness is felt, e'en for the *relish* of our food, reflecting, as it does, His goodness. "Thy works are *now accepted*." 'Tis not the building of a hospital, nor church endowed. 'Tis not the catalogue of rich bequests to this or that "foundation;" nor yet the largess to supply the wants of thousands. All this may still be done, and not accepted, unless it's done in faith. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) "The praying sweep," who sings his carol at the chimney-top—or the poor believer, who picks his oakum at the workhouse-door, is more accepted in his work than they. From morn to night, from night to morning—eating or working, walking or at rest—the man is blessed, who lives on Jesus. Thrice blessed e'en the servant's servant, if he serve the Lord.

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*"Let thy garments be always white, and anoint thy head with ointment."*—ECCLES. IX. 8.

"*TIDINESS next to godliness*," they say. The saying is good; for cleanliness becomes the heirs of glory. 'Twas never meant that Christians should be *slovens*. Uncleanliness is want of principle, and argues an ill-ordered mind,—as tho' the man had neither taste, nor talent, to be cleanly. 'Tis a flaw in one's consistency to be a sloven. The dress neglected—the person

badly kept—the broken furniture—the unswept floor,—e'en worldly taste forbids. Shall Christian principle do less, and come behind in matters of propriety?—Some men are slovenly by nature; 'tis hard to cure—but grace does *all* things. And, Christian reader, if this be *thine* infirmity, I prithee think it not beneath thee to try and cure it. E'en *here* the *Spirit's* help is needed, more than in greater matters, since here you are tempted to rely on *self*. Deep-seated habits, of whatever kind, are only cured by watching unto prayer.—Some men are slovens from neglect; habits of study make them careless; their eye is fixed on its abstractions, and overlooks the foreground of reality. This is a morbid state.—Others are slovenly on *principle*, as monks and hermits; and men of God at times confound neglect of person with contempt for finery.—Some men are slovens, and that *unwittingly*. They think and dream, and read and pray,—their minds absorbed in heaven; they forget they still are denizens of earth; they see not what is seen by others, and noted to the prejudice of grace. Forgive me, Reader,—the coat unbrushed, the hair disshevelled, and unwashed hands,—can these be fruits of righteousness, or marks of grace? Oh, no. Much may be learned from Moses' law—the Gospel of *Leviticus*. How carefully is cleanliness enforced, and all uncleanness awfully condemned! And *why*? The one, the type of *holiness*, the last, the type of *sin*. *We* have the types enforced by *Christ* Himself. Shall we be more remiss than they? Oh, keep

before thee the countless multitude so bright and fair! (Rev. vii. 9.) Think of their robes so white. Think of the fountain opened for all uncleanness (Zech. xiii. 1),—the blood of Jesus. Art thou a true believer, that blood has cleansed thy soul as well as theirs? Then let its virtue straight be seen upon thy person; its power reflected e'en in thine house, and raiment,—that so God's name be glorified, and that none should say thy practice, and thy principles are at variance. Consistency is ne'er to be despised. Would'st thou not be a sloven in thy soul, then be no sloven in thine outward man.

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*“Live joyfully with the wife of thy bosom all the days of thy vanity.”—ECCLES. IX. 9.*

DAYS of *vanity* are days of *care*. Man's days are days of vanity; thus man requires an *help meet*. God's works are wonderful; rich in design, variety, and power. Woman is part of man,—bone of his bone; flesh of his flesh; in nature one; partner of all his frailties; partaker of his passions; in heart and mind his counterpart,—and yet how *different*! From infancy another creature; her sphere of life—her objects and pursuits—her tone of mind—her mode of action—her tastes, her energies, her garb, her person—cast in another mould. *Whence* comes the difference? *How* is the mind prepared, congenial to the sex? *How* is the body framed in unison? How is it brought to pass that the



creature to be born is man, or woman? But *why* the difference? That man might have an *help meet*,—something so different from himself, that it should be a help, from dint of contrast. But who can tell what woman is to man? Who can explain the nature of her influence—to soothe, to modify, to bear his troubles—to smooth his roughness—to lessen all his cares?—“*Live joyfully*,” the Preacher says. Live meekly with her; live tenderly; live peaceably. Love her, and cherish her, as Christ the Church. (Eph. v. 29.) “*That is thy portion*” (ver. 9),—a fragment of true happiness, that survived the fall. That is thy *privilege*—thy *duty*; not less a privilege to love and cherish, than to possess the boon. You lose “the portion,” when you lose the joy; you lose the joy, when you despise the blessing.—The Preacher tells of *many* wonders. (Prov. xxx. 18—31.) Methinks that he forgot the *chiefest* of them *all*,—how *woman bears with man*; forgives his injuries; endures his violence; o'erlooks his failings; requites him good for evil. How oft his contradiction turns joy to sorrow! And yet “the weaker vessel” is strong to bear,—stronger than e'en the strongest of the stronger sex.—“*Live*” with her “*joyfully*!” Oh, child of God, live meekly, tenderly! The more you honour *her*, the more you honour *self*; the more you cherish *her*, the more you love *yourself*; the more you bear with her for Jesus' sake, the more you have fellowship with God in Christ. *His* glory, dignity, and office, is to love His *bride*, the

*Church.* Thy glory is to imitate thy Lord. May grace, then, go before, and set you in His steps! (Psa. lxxxv. 13.)

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"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."—ECCLES. IX. 10.

DUTIES are *duties*. Painful or pleasant—trifling or great—public or obscure—duties are *duties still*. In things indifferent a choice is left; in *duties* there is *none*. The rule is, "do it *with thy might*." Who should be niggardly of time, or strength, when God presents a duty to be done? How *numberless* are duties! Masters and servants; parents and children; buyers and sellers; friend and friend; in all the round of daily work, and mutual dependance, *all* have their *duties*.—To do them with our "*might*" means not the hurry of excitement, or of noisy diligence; but to act with steady calmness, and a quiet purpose, as serving God; to perform each family, and household, duty, not as a task, with grudging mind—but cheerfully. The most menial duty, thus performed, will give a freshness to our work, and acts of service, that nothing else will give.—How needful this refreshment to cheer our daily toil,—to see, and find the Lord in every duty,—and thus to do it with our *might*.—Say, ye who serve the counter, or who, in other ways, are used the livelong day to bear the whims, to please the taste, to answer the demands, of all who come—need ye not something to relieve the mind, to cheer the heart, and turn your trouble into rest? Do

you ever snatch a moment, midst your many calls, to lift your heart to Jesus, to purge your sins, to give you strength, to sanctify your toil; and then forthwith renew your energy, add zeal to patience, and do your duty with your "might?"—The Preacher speaks of what we "*find* to do," as though of something that may meet us *unexpectedly*. The rule is still the *same*. You are interrupted when you wish it not,—some other thing to do, than what you wished. Whate'er it be, do it with thy *might*. 'Tis Jesus sends the interruption; 'tis He appoints the task; receive it graciously, and do it heartily. The *Lord* is in it,—you'll *find* Him in it, if you seek Him there.—Some visitor comes in. Maybe you wish him not—but yet, receive him with your "might." Could he have come, if God had not appointed him? Then speak not to him as though your time were lost, and every moment were an hour, that he is with you—but seek to improve the time. It is your business for the present; then do it well—and thus you will glorify the God, who sent it, more than in all the zeal of what you *meant* to do.—No duty should be done with half a heart, or half a hand. Let not the heart be absent while the hand is at work. All that's worth doing, is worth doing *well*. A hurried way, e'en in a trifle, will neither help you, nor bring a blessing with it. You cannot hurry, and think of God the while. Then seek the way of working quietly, with sober diligence, and peaceful energy; and thus, whate'er you do, you'll "*do it*" with your "*might*."

*"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."*—  
ECCLES. IX. 10.

OH 'tis a solemn thought—death cuts thy course in twain. On one side all is time, on the other is eternity. Things e'en for eternity are done in present time; and things of time must now be done, or *never*. Thou canst not take with thee duties undone, to do them there; *here* they must stay behind, *for ever* to remain *undone*!—Is it to save thy *soul*? Make no delays. Jesus the *Saviour* is *here*. Jesus the *Judge* is *there*. *Here* you may seek and find; you cannot find Him *there*. *Here* sin is washed away; sin meets with vengeance *there*.—Is it to speak of Christ to some poor, wandering soul? As far as *you* are concerned, 'tis now, or *never*. Be faithful while you may.—Is it to do some work of charity—some act of kindness? Is it to act the peacemaker? Perhaps you are the only one to do it, the only one of influence to bring discordant souls together. If you neglect to do it, death may come; the precious moment is lost; and lasting discord may proclaim your broken purpose.—Or you may have in mind to benefit a friend, to make a present from your substance; something that you may give, yet cannot "will away." *Make no delays*. *What* canst thou do "in the grave, whither thou goest?" Have you a "will" to make—a "will" to alter? *Delay it not*. The mind is averse to it. A shudder seizes you, when called to do it. Flesh

shrinks from what is to be when self is gone. The world is a blank to self,—a gulph of unreality, when self, even in prospect, is no longer there. You think you are bringing death before the time; ringing the knell of your departure. Let not such thoughts as these deter you. Will death come sooner because you make your “will?” If death at last o’ertake you unawares, when power is gone, and sense fast ebbs away; oh what a pang may seize you, to think that wife or child is unprovided for, through your *delay*! ’Tis true you leave them to a Father’s care, and, trusting in His providence, you pray that your neglect be overruled in mercy; yet it must be a real pain—a strange sensation—to know that glory is thine, and yet to feel a *pang*—that forward all is bright, while backwards hangs a cloud—a cloud of sad uncertainty. Faith mounts on eagles’ wings, superior to the seeming threats of “time and chance;” yet faith, at times, may be ashamed to act, and blush to own a libel on her character.

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“*Time and chance happeneth to them all.*”—ECCL.  
IX. 11.

TIME, and her handmaid “*Chance*”—in other words, *God’s providence*, clad in the vesture of uncertainty. God’s ways bespeak His wisdom and His power; wise to adapt, and mighty to fulfil. Viewed with the eye of sense, they oft assume an air of fickleness; by which it is inferred that all things happen without rhyme,

or reason—no settled law pervading, no sovereign will directing, their occurrence. Thus man invades the attributes of God, and robs Him of His honour—as though some mock divinity presided o'er us, and made caprice his rule of action.—Man's wants are various, and require a treatment ever varying. Hence the varieties of "*time and chance*;" not one event occurs without its meaning. 'Tis fitted to correct, to humble, or encourage; to fill the mind with thoughts of God; to show man's utter weakness to keep himself, or guard against the future; in fine to make him say, "It is the Lord; His hand; His power; His will."—Such treatment is required for a fallen race. No law of certainty would suit the purpose. Shivered to atoms by the "fall," all order is gone from man. Each broken fragment of his nature reflects prismatic rays of frailty—their hue, their colour, their intensity, for ever varying; each calling for a providence adapted to its need; and, as the prism varies, so is the treatment changed.—The eye that counts the feathers on the insects' wings; that numbers up the blades of grass; that counts the drops of water in the ocean; and registers each grain of sand upon the shore—is quick to see, and swift to send. Hence all the changes, accidents, and "*chances*," of man's experience. Hence nor "*race*" is "*to the swift, nor battle to the strong,*" nor *bread*, nor *wealth*, "*nor favour,*" to human wisdom, "*skill*" or "*understanding.*" (Ver. 11.) Man may propose; all the disposing is of God. God's "*chance*" is not

the "chance" of *men*—all fickle and confused. God's "chance" is *sure*; fixed in its principle; certain in its aim; acting on rules of wisdom, inscrutable to man, yet clear and well-defined. Man fails, he knows not *why*. He calculates in vain. His mines are crossed by countermines—the under-workings of the Hand, that made the worlds; of Him, who is greater in the little things of "*time and chance*," than when He loosens "Orion's" bands—binds "the sweet influences of Pleiades"—brings forth "Mazza-roth in his season"—or guides "Arcturus, and his sons." (Job. xxxviii. 31, 32.)

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"*Yet no man remembered that same poor man.*"—  
ECCLES. IX. 14—16.

If man is grateful for thy services, be *thankful*. If he is ungrateful, be thankful *still*. In serving man for Jesus' sake; thou servest God; *He* will be thankful, if man is *not*—thy service is not lost. The Christian has a remedy for all—a touchstone, that turns all to gold. Coldness he finds, where he expected love; ingratitude, where he looked for thankfulness. But still there's warmth, and gratitude, and love, in *Jesus*—more than He looked for at the hand of man. And thus there *always* is a heart to feel thy kindness, though man should heartless be.—None of thy good intentions come to nought. If man receive them not, they find a welcome, and a home, with *Jesus*. He counts them up; He writes them in his book—and most of all, thy service for the souls of men.

Some scoff. Some listen for a time. Some promise well, and *then* they fall away. E'en *then* thy labour is not lost. God's Word returns not to Him void. (Isa. lv. 11.) It carries back the savour of thy faithfulness. "The travail of his soul" the Saviour sees. For *those* you meant it—He takes it to *Himself*, and counts Himself your debtor. Nay, the most trifling act of kindness—be it to fetch a pitcher from the well; to lend a "lift" in harvest time; to take your turn to watch a restless child; the hand stretched forth to steady tottering steps, be it in crowded thoroughfare, in public "carriages"—or yet when no one is there to see your courtesy; a word, e'en though unheeded, to a passer-by,—it falls not to the ground. The word, unheard by man, is heard by *Jesus*. The act may be forgotten; Jesus forgets it *not*. Men may refuse to serve you in their turn—yet heed it not. 'Tis wounding to the heart. You looked for better things. But can you wonder? *What* is the heart of man? Did you *expect* to find it *thankful*? Well, it often is so—but as often the reverse. Then fret not o'er ingratitude. Thy brother's heart is hard, and so is *thine*; only thou show'st it in some other way.—Let all your deeds be done as unto *God*. In what you do for others, see *first* your duty to the Lord. Even in *these*, let duty to your neighbour be the *second* thing. So shall you never miss your aim, nor find yourself requited with unthankfulness.

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"*The words of wise men heard in quiet.*"—

ECCL. IX. 17.

SPEAK *quietly*, if forcibly you wish to speak. 'Tis not the strength of lungs, that makes impression, but the power of soul. This speaks the most, not in the "fire" of rapid utterance; not in the storm of passionate expression; nor yet the "earthquake" of ecstatic violence—but in the "still small voice" of *quiet* speech. (1 Kings xix. 11, 12.) *Loudness* bespeaks a want of tenderness—a lack of sentiment. Deep-seated feeling loves it not. It keeps its secrets for thy softer words.—'Tis fine to hear a sudden check of oratory; a lull of utterance; the manner changed; the gestures captive led. The words come quietly, as from the world of feeling—e'en from the bottom of the soul—and all is *hushed*. The assembly hang upon the lips of quietness—the pathos of tranquillity.—In "company," *quiet* implies good breeding—in grace, a chastened mind. He, that is much with *Jesus*, can't be loud. *His* presence charms the soul to quietness, and makes it taste the power of that world, where all is rest.—If you are loud, you cannot hear the *Spirit*. He ever speaks in quiet—and in quietness He is heard.—Passion is loud—and so is want of thought. Self-discipline, retirement, and prayer beget a softer manner, and a chastened tongue. He that is loud of speech, hears most of *self*. 'Tis odious to hear the sound of thoughtless *self*—to catch it off its guard, giving its vent to carnal feeling in all the coarseness of its nature.

'Tis humbling to the soul—and *yet*, if others hear, *you* had better hear it too, that you may know your real character, and thus be quick to learn the gentleness of Christ.—Be *quiet* when you speak of *Jesus*—when you invite the sinner to His cross. You can't unfold His love with violence of speech. You *must* be quiet, or love will hold its tongue.—Be *quiet* when you minister rebuke, or tell another of his failings. If you are loud, you cannot reach his heart. The quieter you are, the louder in effect; the more serene, the more persuasive. When loudness lives, persuasion dies.—Then, let your words be "*heard in quiet.*" On *principle* speak quietly. Your gentleness will edify your soul, and thus return its grace with usury.—Study to speak *distinctly*, that your *whisper* may be heard, and thus your *power of quietness* enlarged—yet not the affectation of a maudlin gentleness—but the sterling quiet of the mind of Christ.

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"*Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*—ECCL.  
IX. 18.

WISDOM is better than war, but harder to be had. *This* comes of nature; *that* only comes of *grace*. 'Tis easier to slay your thousands than to have one spark of wisdom.—Peace is a jewel: all honour to the men, who preach it—who travel hundreds of miles upon their peaceful errand; and find access to kings and emperors, to speak to them of *peace*! Men scoff—but God approves their mission. The

failure lies, not in the goodness of their cause, but in the sin of man. Yet 'tis a day-dream, after all, to think that men will hear of *reason*; the reason of the sanctuary; the reason of the Prince of Peace! Man is quite unable, or to receive, or practice *reason*. E'en if he promise, will that ensure performance? Or will it change his heart? He is but a sinner still, brother to him, who shed his brother's blood. (Gen. iv.) Give him—ah! give him, *if you can*, the mind of Jesus. Give him new feelings and affections. Make him, in short, a child of God; and *then* he'll understand you. Till *then* the world will fight, and fight again. Wars will not cease till Christ return, and fill the world with peace.—“Give them an arbiter,” 'tis said, “let *him* decide it!” An arbiter is found. Can *he*, then, change the heart, or bring the nations to their senses? Reason is nought; expostulation nothing better; entreaty, eloquence, and truth, of no avail. Sin masters everything but God. Sin says, “We'll fight it out; the sword's the arbiter of right!” The scabbard is flung away, and *war begins!*—Alas! for wisdom; it finds no place to rest its foot upon; it hovers o'er the battle-field—then hides its head and weeps.—Surely the world is out of course, all its foundations gone. What is it but a *ruin*, after all!—“*Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*” There's *other* war, besides the conflict of the sword—the war of words, and angry passions—of social discord—of family dissension—or courts of law. For each, and all, the only remedy is *wisdom*; wisdom

to love—wisdom to suffer—wisdom to forbear—wisdom to be dumb—to treat your brother kindly—to overcome his evil with your good. You thus disarm him; fairly conquer him; heap coals of fire on his head. *What* weapons are like *these*, found in the armoury of Jesus—kept sharp, and furnished by the Spirit—for the child of God?

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*“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.”—ECCLES. X. 1.*

FLIES are but *little* things—and *yet* they do a world of mischief. Themselves corruptible, they breed corruption, as the Preacher's figure shows. Oft is the odour of fair fame turned to “a stinking savour,” because the flies of inconsistency have festered in it.—Flies are but *flitting* things; they are now on *me*, and now on *you*. Scare them—they are quickly gone; as quickly they return: be ready, then, to scare them off again. Let them but *settle* for a while—they'll sip and sip again—till, drowsy with their feast, they die—*then* follows putrefaction; your sweets are spoiled, and *whom* have you to thank? None but yourself. Had you but seen the *lid* were *on*, or locked your sweetmeats *by*, no thief had stolen, no spoiler tainted, them. The fault was, then, thine own.—Thus *inconsistencies* are fitting things. At first a single act, that hardly settles—then hums it's flight away. Act follows

act, at short, and shorter intervals. Then acts are turned to *habits*. And habits nestle in the soul, and poison it. Had you but checked the act, the habit had not come.—Be wary, then, and scare the “*flies*” away. Though scores invade you, say, *what are flies to you, a living man?* Tease you they may, but cannot settle long *without your leave*. And *what* are Satan’s *flies*—temptations by the score—when met by grace? *Resist* them, and they’ll fly away. (Is. iv. 7.)—What a fair thing the Christian’s name—his good report with others! How hardly earned! How lightly spoiled! How delicate its substance! The faintest breath is seen upon its mirrored face. The smallest “fly” is enough to taint it. Guard well thy character, my brother! Keep it from taint, not for thine own, but for thy Master’s sake. A trifling act—a thoughtless word—how soon it brings thee down, and makes thine ointment to send forth a stinking savour! E’en Christian men are often creatures of impression. Once their opinion turns, ’tis hard to turn again; and years of piety will be forgotten through *one* “unsavory” act. Things present blot the *past* from mortal eyes. Then have thy “*present*” fair—that men may see it, and give God the praise.

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“*The wise man’s heart is at his right hand.*”—

ECCL. x. 2.

A CHRISTIAN’S heart is the treasury of grace (Matt. xii. 35), not *in* itself, nor *of* itself—but in

the *Spirit*. The *heart* is thus the centre of affection—the seat of knowledge—the source of purpose, and emotion—the very soul of spiritual life. 'Tis with the *heart* we feel and think; believe on Christ; and thus receive all doctrinal impression. (Rom. x. 10.) 'Tis from the treasure of the "*heart*" we bring all practical experience—all spiritual fruit—all holy feelings—all edifying speech, and all consistency of life. The *heart* is the abode of memory, and holy recollections—the *Spirit* bringing them to mind, with power to act upon them. In fine, the *heart* contains all the resources of the child of God, drawn from the fountain of God's grace and truth.—To keep the heart with diligence,—to use its powers of thought, and means of action—to exercise our graces with discretion—to have our knowledge at our fingers' ends, our feelings within call—to keep our sensibilities awake, and thus to draw them forth, when needed,—*this* is the part of *wisdom*; *this* is what the Preacher means.—A workman knows the odds between his "*right hand*," and his *left*; and seeks to have his implements at hand, that he *at once* may grasp, and handle them, with all *dexterity*.—'Tis *thus* the Christian is called to use his powers,—to have them at the *right hand* of his energy.—'Tis humbling to meet the enemy, unarmed and unprepared; to lose the victory for lack of grace; to have known the art to conquer, and *yet*, from carelessness, to lose it; to hear, what else might edify, and be no better for it; to

have occasion to speak a word, and yet find nought to say; to try to mention what we have heard, and find it gone from mind—and why? Our heart is at our *left* hand, not our right; and *hence* our failure. The Spirit's sword not kept within our reach; our knowledge suffered to escape, for want of practice; the grace of hearing, feeling, speaking, not to be found, since not in exercise;—*all this* is clumsy workmanship, and bespeaks a heart ill-kept. We seek our weapons, and, when the time is gone by, mayhap we find them, too late to use them, *but* not too late to cause the blush of shame.—A friend says, "*Pray for me!*" Your heart gives no response,—no prayer is found! How chilling to the soul! How humbling! To have your sympathy desired, and find no feeling there, as though you had no heart to beat within you! To have to weep with them that weep, and find no tears to weep with, as though the very fount were dried and gone! Oh, if we lived more prayerfully, and sat more constantly at Jesus' feet, would it be thus? Would it be thus *so often*? My soul, be careful. Let thine heart at thy right hand be ever found!

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"*Yielding pacifieth great offences.*"—

ECCL. X. 4.

YIELDING makes peace with God. We learn it from the *Parable*. (Luke xv.) A *prophet* says the same (Isaiah lv. 7.) In *Job* we find it too; in *David*, and in *Jonah*. (Job xxxiii. 27;

Psalm xxxii. ; Jonah iii.) Man's heart is *proud*, and therefore man is *lost*. "*Hide pride from man,*" and man is *saved*. (Job xxxiii. 17.) *Then* to God's righteousness he *stoops*, and God is *pacified*. (Rom. x. 3.) Only acknowledge that thy sin is great,—that under every tree thou hast idols sought,—and God is *pacified*. (Jer. iii. 13.)—How say you, *yielding* does it? Is not *Christ* our peace? (Eph. ii. 14.) His blood alone can *pacify*, and reconcile to God." 'Tis true, my friend. Christ does it all. The work is *His*; not yours, nor mine. But art thou *willing* to accept His work? That is the question. Pride stumbles at the cross. It stoops not to a bleeding *Saviour*, more than it stoops to *God*. Pride, in its "dignity," o'ertops the highest angels. *They* hide the *face*,—pride turns its *back* on God Himself.—Yes; "*yielding pacifies*;" but even this is not *thy* doing. It is not *man* that yields; man gives not way, and never will. 'Tis *grace* that does it,—man's heart *made willing* in the day of power. (Psalm cx. 3.) To *grace* man is a debtor *still*.—Even for Christian souls 'tis difficult to yield. "*To yield!*" 'Tis right, I know; 'twill pacify my friend; nor rest, nor peace I find, until I yield,—until I learn of Jesus. But *then*, to *say*, "*I am sorry!*" To *own* that I am wrong! *This* is an *effort*.—You try again, "*Is there no other way?*" Can I not keep my pride, and be at peace?" You try to *pray*. You cannot. Why? You have not owned your fault. Pride still is there. Go, say, "*I am wrong*"—go,



pacify your *friend*, and be at peace with *God*.—Who can explain the twofold nature of the saint,—that mystery of good and evil! Now sin is uppermost, now grace; the old man, and the new, ever at deadly strife. Grace gains the day—but *how*? Why gained it not before? And *why* at last?—The heart held out. *Why* held it out so long? *What* made resistance possible? *What* brought it to an end?—But hush, my soul! Thou can'st not solve such mysteries as these. Enough to know thyself a miracle of sin; thy God, a miracle of grace. Be it thy part to follow Jesus—to learn of Him, to yield to God, and man—and be at peace.

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“*Wisdom is profitable to direct.*”—

ECCL. x. 10.

“Does God take care” for digging *pits*, or felling *trees*? Is it not written for *our sakes* (vers. 8, 9; 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10); that each might know his calling, and learn to fill it with propriety,—that all might strive to be expert in what they have to do? God's name is honoured when we thus adorn His doctrine, and show that Christian men can work expertly.—How fitting, then, to know our calling!—first, to discover what we are called to do; and *then*, to do it with our might.—Some call themselves *to preach the Gospel*; Christ called them not. 'Tis proved, both by their doctrine, and their lives. None but the Spirit “calls” in truth; and when He calls, He gives the “*wisdom*,”

needful "*to direct*."—How can a man direct his ways? How walk in holiness and power? How wield the Gospel weapons, or use the Gospel tools? How lead the sinner in the paths of peace—if wisdom guide him not?—It is the same in other walks of life—in "*law*," and medicine, or philosophy; with merchants, tradesmen, or mechanics; with labourers, or household servants. 'Tis right that *all* should know their work, and do it *well*.—All are not equally expert—but all may work with diligence; and, if they are the Lord's, may ask for *grace* to sanctify their powers, and thus enable them to use them well.—Such shall have good report of "*them that are without*." (1 Tim. iii. 7.) Man honours those, who do their best—and owns the difference 'twixt those who waste their powers, and them who make the most of what they have.—'Twas said by one well known for piety, that if a saint were but a "*shoe-black*," his shoes should be the brightest in the town. And this should be the rule with all,—whether to plane a lath, or scrub a floor; to steer a vessel, or to plough a field,—whate'er the labour of the head or hand,—that *all* should try to do their labour *well*.—The household sempstress! Now-a-days, what endless handi-works! What divers forms, materials, and hues! What shall we say? How hard at times to draw the line 'twixt usefulness, and fashion; 'twixt what is solid, and what is vain! *This* we may say (gravely, yet courteously),—all that you do, do *well*; but still be careful *what* you do—lest haply it be said, "*What doest thou?*"

Lest *Jesus* say, "You worked for fashion, to deck the chamber, or to please the eye; you did not work for *Me*."

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"*A babbler is no better.*"—ECCL. X. 11.

OH what a comfort to have a *friend*, a confidant,—a man who knows to keep a secret,—whose ear is ready to receive, whose heart is able to retain, whate'er is told him,—a man, who can resist the charm of telling what he knows, and keep it within the bolts and bars of secrecy! 'Tis a foul blot upon one's honour, *to tell a secret*; to bring another into trouble, *because you could not hold your tongue*.—How *mean* it makes one feel, to have it said, "*Why did you tell it?*" Nor is it merely when it's *told* you as a *secret*. Your friend has spoken in your presence of things that touch his honour, or the fame of others. He *said not*, "Do not mention it!" He rested on your character. He said, "He'll not repeat it. I know I am safe. He is not given to talk." He gave you credit for discretion, and found himself *mistaken*!—Oh, who can tell the harm that is done by breach of confidence! Who can follow, in its course, a secret thus let loose! One tells it to another, and thus it goes from mouth to mouth—from ear to ear—depositing in many hearts what never should be known; gathering, as it flies, untold excess of scandal.—If itching *ears* are bad, sure itching *lips* are worse—more hurtful in the end. And yet 'tis sweet to fallen nature, to be the *first*

to guess—the *first* to know—the first to *tell* !  
 'Tis a strange pleasure, after all,—a sorry way  
 of feeding self-importance,—that for a time  
 (oh, short-lived pleasure!) you be admired as  
 the mouth-piece of “intelligence!” ‘Tis  
 nought but vanity. I pray thee, mortify the  
 taste; discountenance the habit. Be not  
 ambitious of the honour.—E’en where the  
 matter is harmless, let others tell the tale, for  
 fear you pride yourself on having told it.  
 Oh, ’tis a sign that grace is low, when pleasure  
 such as *this* is coveted, and souls are taken with  
 the charm of “*telling*.”—Where “character”  
 is at stake, and what you hear concerns the  
 faults of others, ’tis well to bury it *at once*  
 in secrecy,—not to repeat it to a living soul.  
 Practise the habit; in the end you’ll find it  
 pleasant; and *then*, ’twill cost you more to tell,  
 than to suppress, it.—Of all the things we hear,  
*how few* are worth repeating! Weigh it before  
 you mention it. You’ll mostly find it is not  
 worth the breath expended on it; far less will  
 it repay the risk of injuring yourself or others.  
 Shun, then, the approach of evil. Hate e’en  
 the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 28.)  
 And keep thy lips from learning babblers’  
 ways.

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“*The lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*”—  
 ECCL. X. 12.

A WORLD of evil is in the *tongue*. Though but  
 a little member, yet it boasts great things.  
 It sets on fire the course of nature. No wonder,

—itself is set on fire of hell. (James iii. 5, 6.) By *words* we are justified, and by our *words* condemned. The idle *words* will do it, without the actions. The idle *words* will seal the sinner's doom. (Matt. xii. 36, 37.) Words of impatience, violence, and wrath—words of disdainful tempers—expose a man to hell. (Matt. v. 21, 22.) But 'tis not violence alone. 'Tis all the character—the entire man. *Words* testify of this, as plainly as weathercocks declare the wind that blows. Of the abundance of the heart the lips will speak.—Some lips speak nought but vanity. The wanton oath—the ribald jest—the idle scoff: these savour of the “pit” too plainly. And then, the empty talk—the tittering words—vain exclamations—breath wasted on unmeaning nothings! God is not in all their *words*, because He is not in all their *thoughts*.—Oh, what a reckoning with idle lips at last! To have talked of everything but God—of all but Jesus! If *ever* those names were uttered, 'twas but in lightness, or unmeaning prayer. Say, is not *this* enough to seal our condemnation? My soul, bless God. 'Tis of His grace alone if thou escape the charge,—not of thyself. “Lo, *this* has touched thy lips; thy sin is purged.” (Isaiah vi. 7.) Such words the Prophet heard; such words were said to *thee*, or thou wert guilty still.—How many a man seems to have wisdom, till he *speaks*! His looks are “taking;” his manners good—his speech proclaims him other than he seems. His *lips* have *swallowed up himself*! What silence did, his words have now

undone. He *had* a character ; it *was*, and *is not*. How much a Christian reputation depends on what is *spoken* ! How oft a *word* in private has undone the effect of public teaching,—a moment's vanity destroyed the work of years ! How oft the profit of an interview been lost through want of gravity !—Say, Reader, have *thy* lips ne'er *swallowed up thyself*, nor marred thine influence, through some unguarded word ? 'Tis bitter thus to eat the bread of self-humiliation, and see how vain, how passing vain, we are ! Then pray the Lord to set a watch before thy mouth ; to guard the entrance of thy lips ; lest, otherwise, they be a sepulchre, to “swallow up” thyself, and others too. (Psalm cxli. 3.)

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“*Because he knoweth not how to go to the city.*”—  
ECCL. X. 15.

MOST men would seek “*the city*,” in a way—the City of the Lord, the New Jerusalem. Few like to say they seek it *not*. 'Twere to confess they are on their way to hell.—Some trouble not themselves to find it. They think they are sure to reach it ; they know not how. “God is merciful !” they say ; and there the matter ends. “'Twere barbarous to think it otherwise.” They think that all men fall asleep on earth, and wake in heaven. Such take it easily. How many such there be !—Others make much ado. Much pains they take to seek “*the city*.” Pity they know not how to find it ! They fast ; say many prayers ; early and late you see them at the shrine of vain observances. Their dress,

their hair, their whole appearance, show that they are eaten up with "forms," which *loudly* say, "We seek *the City*;" but which as clearly prove they know not how to find it.—Some take the *Pharisaic* road, and think it leads to heaven. They pride themselves upon their works, and strict integrity of life. Alas! when death removes the bandage from their eyes, they will find they are in Samaria's midst, and not in Zion, as they thought. (2 Kings vi. 20.)—Others say plainly that they cannot find "*the city*." They ask the road of every one they meet, "Say, friend, will *faith*, or *works*, lead me to Zion's hill?" *This* path they tread, now *that*—taking each by-way, as it comes; but still with importunity they cry, "We have not found the road!"—Some, strange to say! walk *backwards* to "the city," or, at least, they *try* to walk. They *say* they seek it, but their face is turned the other way; they have the *world* in view. Say, can they find the city *thus*?—But *some* there are, who walk the narrow road,—the *only* road, that leads to Zion. Once *they* were wanderers too. But Jesus met them as they strayed. "*I am the way*," He said, "and I alone. None cometh to" *the City* "but by Me." (John xiv. 6.) And now, through grace, they follow *Jesus*. Both road, and guide, He is; His work, the only causeway for their feet; His footprints ever telling that He is in the way, going before them to *Jerusalem*,—not, as He did before, to death and shame; but, through His finished work, leading them to glory, e'en to "*the City*" now prepared. (Mark x. 32;

Heb. xi. 16.) Blessed are they, that do His will, and have a right to enter through the gates into the New Jerusalem. There shall they see His face; there shall they serve Him. No sun "*the city*" needs, nor moon to light it. *This* is the name by which it is called, "*The Lord is there.*" (Rev. xxii. ; Ezek. xlvi. 35.)

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"*By much slothfulness the building decayeth.*"—  
ECCLES. X. 18.

BEWARE of idleness—and, most of all, avoid the thief, *procrastination*, and his counterpart, "*to-morrow.*" Look sharp—or else they'll pilfer your time, your substance, and your character. Why should you say, "*to-morrow,*" when "*to-day*" is better? The rent is seen—the flaw is acknowledged; you *mean* to have it done. "'Tis but a *stitch*," you say; "'tis but a brick is gone!" Yes, friend, 'twas only one, but *now* it's three or four; and will be twenty, if you mend it not. The less the pains required, the less excuse. 'Tis morning now; "you will do it in the afternoon." Night, in its darkness, sees it is not done; so patent is thy negligence! The *morrow* comes; another and another. I prithee, Friend, say not that word again.

How hard it is to be consistent! to carry out one's principles; to work them out in trifles—in things of every day's occurrence! Yet character is made up of this, and that—*small* things of character, as well as great. And what I ask thee, is *consistency*, but to do all things in



time, in order, and in place?—Habits are always worth correcting. Things outward speak of that which is *within*. If you defer to stop a gap, or mend a hole, 'tis probable you do the same with faults and failings. The principle is the same in either case. The eye that scans the one, discerns the other. One mind affords the energy; one heart supplies the courage, to correct the fault; 'tis the same face, that *ought* to blush for slovenly delay.—Then strive to be exact, for conscience' sake. *Who* says, "*Where* is the cause? *Why* so particular?" The matter is great. *Consistency* is at stake. 'Tis time to be particular.—Beware of *small delays*. Know you not that *little* foxes spoil the vines; and vines have tender grapes? (Cant. ii. 15.) "*Young lions*" have "*great teeth*." Then break them out *at once*. They'll be greater by and by, and do a world of injury. (Psalm lviii. 6.) *One* fault allowed—*one* evil way unchecked—passion indulged in—temper not subdued; oh, *who* can tell what trouble they will cause thee afterwards! If duly summoned at the first assault, the garrison will soon give in. The more delay, the harder it will be to take the fortress. *Rust* is a little thing at first—but how corroding! How easily contracted! A slight exposure does it. Thus slothfulness creeps on by small degrees, and soon corrodes the vitals of one's energy.

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*"A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."*—  
ECCL. X. 20.

'Tis dangerous to *speaking*, where secrecy is required. The thought is thine own, the while you keep it to yourself. But *once* the cage is opened, and the bird let loose—who knows how far its flight may bear it? At first you think to tie it by the foot—you tell your secret to a *single* friend. *He* tells it to another, who mentions it but to a *chosen few*! The cord is loosened—*then* it is slipped. Your "bird" no more will roost in secrecy.—*What* makes you tell your secret? The itch of *telling*. And can you wonder that *others* feel the like, and love to gratify the taste, which you could not restrain?—Then learn to keep your secret to yourself. 'Tis snug to know the "bird" is in the cage, securely fastened. And, though it flutter against the bars, desiring its liberty, *still* keep it close. No harm 'twill do, while *there*. What mischief it might do, let loose, you know not.—If you think evil of a man, what need to *mention* it? His faults are known to thee, but *why* repeat them? *Who* has a right to ask it? God suffered thee to know them, that thou might'st *pray* for him—and not to harm thyself and others, by spreading his dishonour.

'Tis dangerous to *think*! Thought oozes out at *tiny* openings! A look betrays it. A word in sleep may speak it; unguarded speech unfold it.—'Tis dangerous to *think*! Thoughts

have their way, if once you harbour them—and do their best to gain the surface. What is wrong to speak, 'tis oft as wrong to think. Who made thee judge thy brother's character? Who gave his failings to thy care, or bid thee turn them in thy mind? *Pray* for him, if you will; the more, the better. Think what God's grace may do for him. Think of his turning to the Lord. Think of his sitting at the feet of Jesus. *Such* thoughts are safe; they will do no injury either to him, or thee. But, if you harbour thoughts against *the man*, and not against *the sin*, most probably the thought will "*out*," and injure you.—To keep a thought at bay—how curiously deep—how deeply curious, the exercise! To treat your mind as though it were another's; your thoughts, as though they ne'er belonged to you; to give them strangers' fare, and keep them at respectful distance! All this is possible. 'Tis *often* done by them, whose sense is exercised to sever good from evil. My soul, this exercise be *thine*; that so thy thoughts be captive led, and Jesus rule thy tongue. So nothing shall escape thee, that thou should'st retain, nor others' character be injured at thine hand.

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"*Cast thy bread upon the waters.*"—ECCL. XI. 1.

BREAD cast upon the waters! It floats away from thee; and, in so doing, floats down the stream to *others*. Thy loss is others' gain,

if *loss* it can be called, that brings thee back a certain recompense. Thy bread—the *very* bread—thou findest not. They, who receive it, give it not again. But what thou givest, thou givest it to God. He will repay thee,—in kind, if need be. And, if not in kind, He will give thee what is better—the Bread of *heaven*, in lieu of earthly bread. But then 'tis needful to give in *faith*, for faithless gifts are nought with God. “To *seven* give a portion; yea, to *eight*.” (Ver. 2.) God loves the cheerful giver. He likes to see His bounty reflected back in thine. And if in faith thou give, thou givest it, not merely for the sake of others, but thine own. “Thou knowest not *what evil*” there “shall be upon the earth” (ver. 2),—what need to have thy gifts repaid with interest. If gifts thou gave not, *where*, then, the interest? If none be due, will interest be given? 'Tis blessed *thus* to give,—to look beyond the act of giving, and e'en beyond thy brother's need; to take thy walk amidst the attributes of God, reflected, as they are, in God's *commands*; to lose thy vision 'mid “the lasting hills”—the hills of promise; to catch a somewhat of the mind of God; by faith to grasp God's possibilities; to see the principles, on which He acts; to trust Him, as you would trust a *man*. Yes, fellow-sinner, what a libel upon thee and me! The libel is true; it is not false,—to trust *Jehovah* as we would trust a *man*! *This* is the way to give, and give *indeed*. This is the way to wing thy soul with energy. Ah! what we want is *tenderness* of heart! We give not, if

we feel not, or we give not cheerfully. Clouds must be full, ere clouds be emptied. (Ver. 3.) The coffers may be full, and yet the heart be empty. Thy coffer must be poured into thine heart, before thy heart can give. As is thine heart, thy hand will be. Say not, "I feel, but yet I give not!" Hast thou the means to give, a giftless feeling is nought. But if thou feel, and yet have nought to give, thy giftless feeling is a gift indeed. Reader, God give His grace to thee and me, to give with cheerfulness, yet *not without discretion*; to see who needs our bounty, and who needs it not; to rise superior to sense and flesh, and act upon the principles of heaven!

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"*Thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit.*"—

ECCL. XI. 5.

How acts the *Spirit*? Tell me, if you can—how He renews, and acts upon, the soul; how He accompanies the spoken Word; now takes the soul by violence, now wins it unawares. Why one is called in infancy, another called in age! Why either was made willing to receive the call!

You speak of Jesus eloquently. Each soul attentive seems. Your words are hung upon. Lo! tears are shed. Say, *why* is no impression made? The *Spirit* acted not. Oh, tell me *why*!—Again, you speak unaptly, and constrained. Your thoughts come slowly—your words are slower still. "Sure, *no* impression is made *to-day*." But lo! the *Spirit*

moves upon the waters,—souls are renewed and saved. Oh! tell me *why!* Why wrought the Spirit *here?* Why wrought He nothing *there?*—You find your opportunity,—so choice, so good. All things combine to favour you. No obstacle impedes; no interruption comes. You say your “say,” and all is heard most willingly. No frown disheartened you. No temper thwarted you. No time could fitter be—and yet the Spirit breathed not, worked not. Oh, tell me *why!*—Another stemmed the tide of cross events. All things seemed contrary; the time ill-chosen, the circumstance untoward; and yet the Spirit worked,—the Spirit entered; His work was felt. Oh, tell me *why!*—*One* comes, *invited* to receive the Truth. You pray, you reason, you exhort—intreat. The Spirit comes not, breathes not. Nought is done. Oh, tell me *why!*—You wish *another* gone. He is there against your will. He stays, he listens; he receives the Truth. The Spirit enters. The man is born again. Oh, tell me *why!*—God tells thee not. He tells it not to *me*. But *this* we gather from the Spirit’s work,—that He is Sovereign in all He does,—works *when*, and *where*, He will. Thus, in the morn, He bids us, “sow” our “seed,” and “in the evening” not “withhold” our “hand.” (Ver. 6.) Our duty is to speak,—at all times to be instant. ’Tis all we have to do, and all we *can*. *Regard not*, then, the *clouds*. *Observe thou not the winds*. (Ver. 4.) Times adverse, or times favouring, are nought

to thee. If eloquence could do it; persuasion, aptitude, or delicate contrivance; then, *this* might favour, *that* might hinder, thee. But as it nought depends on what you do or say, but simply on the Spirit's will and power, what can you do but work in faith—speak in simplicity—and leave results to Him, who worketh all in all?—Be not surprised when speaking takes effect, nor say, “Who would have thought it!” This is to grieve the Spirit.—Be not disheartened, if speaking comes to nought. The Spirit wrought not. What is that to *thee*; art thou responsible? Canst thou command His time, and tell Him *when* to act? Then give Him honour still. His is the honour when He works; He is honourable when He worketh not. To Him be all the honour given!

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“*In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall lie.*”—ECCLES. XI. 3.

SAY, Reader,—’tis a thought of deep solemnity—*where* shalt thou be this time *five hundred years*? Hast thou e’er looked it in the face? If not, thou well may’st shudder. Five hundred years will pass away, and find thee still in being—more keenly sensible than now, to joy, or sorrow. *Not here*, ’tis true; but elsewhere.

Ah, Reader, tell me *where*—this time *five thousand years*, where shalt thou be?

This time *five million* years? This time *five hundred million*? This time *five thousand million*? This time *five hundred thousand million*? This time *five million times a million* years, *where*, Reader, wilt thou be? Ah, tell me *how you die*; I'll tell you *where* you will be. One simple fact will fix the knotty point, and mark your state for ever.—One simple question I would ask thee, *Believest thou in Jesus*? To fall asleep in Jesus, is to awake in glory. Be this thy portion, millions of years shall pass away,—yea, countless millions,—and find thee *still* amidst the throng of saints and angels; *still* find thee gazing on the face of Jesus—thy soul *still* bathed in glory.—To die in *sin*; in other words, to die without an interest in *Jesus*, were to awake in endless misery,—in death unceasing,—“the second death;” ranging, in woe unspeakable, through all eternity.—*One* moment fixes thee for ever—the hour of *death*. No change can happen after death. *What* change can happen *then*? Can flames of hell burn out thy sins? Say, does the potter's fire burn out the colours of the potter's vase? Nay, but it burns them *in*, and fixes them indelibly. Thus acts the quenchless flame on sinners and their sins.—Or, will the company of devils, and the wicked dead, *renew* thy soul, and make it meet for heaven? Oh, tell me, if thou can, *how many* years of fire will purify thy soul; *how many* years with Satan restore thee to God's image? Have you not read it? “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”



(Rev. xxii. 11.) Can *Purgatory* stand against the truth? Believe it not, my Friend. You'll rue it, if you do. If, as a tree, you fall toward south, or north, *there* shall you be *for ever*. "On the sides of the *North*," there lies the eternal city, New Jerusalem, the City of the King. (Psalm xlviii. 2.) Fall there; *there* shalt thou *ever* be. Fall *south-ward*, what hand can then remove thee, or make thee a vessel meet for the Master's use? (2 Tim. ii. 21.)

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"*The days of darkness.*"—ECCOL. XI. 8.

WHAT a mysterious thing is *darkness*! Who can explain its power? I am still the same in darkness, as in light; in mind, and body, and estate, the same. All things around maintain their relative position, uninfluenced by night, or day. *What* makes the difference of *feeling*?—The horror of great *darkness*! (Gen. xv. 12.) *What* is it? *Whence* does it proceed? The day was made for wakefulness; the night for sleep. Darkness was never made for waking eyes, or waking thoughts. Grace softens it, and robs it of its gloom; but even then, "truly the light is sweet, and 'tis a pleasant thing" to see "the sun." (Ver. 7.) Darkness, and *sorrow* are congenial things; darkness and *misery*.—"The *days of darkness*!" What are they? Days of distress; "darkness that may be *felt*" (Exodus x. 21); days, in which 'tis *felt* that man is fallen; in which the sunshine

of prosperity is gone, and man no longer dreams of happiness unbroken.—With *some* how brief the day! How passing short the dream! How soon “*the days of darkness*” come! Their childhood is ushered in with clouds; sickness or sorrow tends them all their days; and soon they set in darkness, as they rose. With *others*, oh, how different! They hardly know what “darkness” means. They *hear* of sorrow, pain, and trouble; *that* is all. They little think that “days of darkness” will at last be *theirs*.—“*The days of darkness!*” Yes, they’ll *come*. “They shall be *many*.” Oh, *how* many they will be! Thou knowest not what worlds of sorrow are compressed within the nutshell of a moment! When once the bubble bursts, and days of health are gone,—when death and judgment stare thee in the face,—who can express the world of darkness, a few short months may prove? To think of talents wasted! Of God neglected! Of opportunities gone by! Conscience alarmed! The judgment now convinced! The mind unhinged by fear! The body tottering to its fall! Backwards, a dreary waste,—forwards, a yawning void! Death, judgment, and eternity, harrowing the soul! Say, are *these* not “*days of darkness?*” Will not a *few* suffice thee, when they come? Not e’en a few you would *ask*; but God may *give* thee many. If such be life,—life, and its darkness, the inner darkness!—Oh, what is death? Death and *its* darkness! The *outer* darkness! (Matt. viii. 12.) Oh, for the light of life to cheer thee now,—to cheer thee after death! Oh, for the

Lord, the Christ—Jesus, the Sinner's Friend !  
Oh, for the Bright and Morning Star, to  
*light thee now and ever !* (Rev. xxii. 16.)

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*"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," &c.—*  
ECC. XI. 9, 10.

MANKIND is a mystery—God overruling, ordering, directing ; *yet* man as free to act, as though none overruled ; as bold of heart, as though responsible to none. How clearly this is seen in *youth* ! What lawless vanity ! What free indulgence ! What passionate excess ! What thoughtless unconcern ! What elasticity ! What vast exuberance of health and spirits ! Restless in pleasure—eager to enjoy—no weariness in following out its ways. 'Tis sin grown young again in each succeeding race ; passion renewed, to flow in younger veins ; as though pleasure increased with each succeeding age ; as though the fire of centuries burned in the bosom of existing youth.—Youth is a mystery ! 'Tis early days with man—the mind susceptible ; prejudice unconfirmed ; habits not yet matured ; the feelings tender ; the judgment pliable. You would think 'twere easy to conduct the man to truth and godliness ; and *yet*, with all this pliability, exists the force concentrated of human passion—the veriest intensity of all that is vain—the wildest day dream of all that is earthly.—Poor youth ! I pity thee. Launched on the billows of a treacherous sea—a traitor world without—a traitor heart within ; pleasures to meet thy passions—snares made to

catch thy failings—all smiles around invitingly. It seems almost a *duty* to enjoy thyself, and take thy swing of all that pleases thee.—*Conscience*, where dwellest thou in youth? There art thou *ever* heard? Say, art thou fairly gone, or plead'st thou still? Can thy voice be heard 'mid rampant vanity? False manliness would choke thine utterance—the force of vital power put thee down. Yet art thou felt at times. Thou may'st be dormant, yet thou art not dead.—Listen, my youthful friend! Hearest thou not? *What* voice is it? Look not *without*, the voice is from *within*. It bids thee pause and think. It tells thee of a God, a providence, a Judge. It tells thee thou art mortal. It tells thee of a world to come. It says, "Thou art a sinner." Says it not, "Thou need'st a Saviour?" Ah! says it not, "A Saviour may be sought—a Saviour *found*; sin be confessed, and sin *forgiven*?" Says not the voice, "Beware!" Then listen to the voice, my friend.

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"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—ECCL. XII. 1.

REMEMBER thy Creator! He speaks as if thou hadst *known* Him, and—*forgotten*. But is it so? Ah no! By nature thou know'st Him not. *Forgetfulness* was *born* in thee—forgetfulness of God. Thine the forgetfulness of utter ignorance—of darkness *tenfold* dark, because to thee invisible. Thou art *born* a prodigal—

far from thy first forefather's Father's home. Take, then, his wanderings to *thyself*. Appropriate his sin, and say, "I will return, because my father strayed. I will straight *remember* all that *he forgot*."—God deals with Adam's children, as He dealt with Adam's self; speaks to *thy* fallen nature as He spoke to *his*. His nature is *thine*, as though he fell but *yesterday*. God says to *thee*, as He would say to *him*, "*Remember!* Trace back thy wandering steps. Undo thy past forgetfulness. Return to holiness. Return to God."—*But* how canst *thou remember*? Thy *memory* is gone. Search all the corners of thy heart and brain—thou wilt not find it. They'll tell thee that *many* things have lodged in them—but God's remembrance *never*. Ah, try, and try again! You will find I am right.—Are you in unbelief? You never knew the Lord. Then *how* remember whom you have never known?—*What* is to be done? Why, what would *Adam* say? He would say, "Restore me what I have lost! Give me, O God, give me my *memory* again! Give me my thoughts of thee! Give me my knowledge of the truth! Restore my soul! Lead me in paths of righteousness for thy name's sake!" (Ps. 23.) Take with thee words, my friend. (Hos. xiv. 2.) Take *Adam's* words, and make them *thine*. *God* must remember *thee*, ere thou remember *Him*—give thee His grace—and pardon all thy sins. Then shalt thou track thy way to Adam's sin. Thou'lt say, "'Twas mine! In Adam I have sinned; forgotten my Creator; turned from God. In all his fallen

race *I* have been a rebel, and a wanderer *still!*" But hark! my friend. What Adam lost, the second Adam found. What Adam took away, the second has giv'n again. Am I the Lord's? In Adam fell I—in Christ I am risen again. In Adam I forgot—in Christ my memory came again. In Adam I am in darkness—in Jesus I have light. *Now I remember! Now I live!* And by the grace of God I'll ne'er forget again. Reader, this grace—this light—this memory, be thine! If thine it be already, thank God that it is thine. If not, ask God to give it thee. He'll not refuse thy prayer.

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"*While the evil days come not.*"—ECCL. XII. 1.

"REMEMBER thy Creator *now!*" It may be now, or *never*. What wait you for, my friend? Is life so sure? Thy soul so little worth? Is time more precious than eternity? *What* wait you for? The time of sickness and the hour of death! Believe me, Friend, these are not times for thought. Tell me, do *trifling* ailments aid, or let, thy thinking powers? Think ye that *graver* malady will help thee more—the aching head—the burning skin—the throbbing pulse—the sleepless night—the jaded powers? Why wait you, then, for *these*?—Wait you for *later years*, to *sober* you? Be not deceived. Age changes not the heart. It sobers not the mind. It severs not the cords, that bind you to the world. These shrink, 'tis true. They lose their elasticity. But *then* 'tis only shrink-

ing into *harder* stuff. Age only deadens—it quickens not, the soul. What deadens it to pleasure, will deaden it to *thought*.—Why turn you from the truth? Because the *effort* is greater than you like to make. If youthful powers shun the task, think you that age will find it lighter?—“*The evil days!*” When all the powers are “*ossified*” with use; when mental energy begins to flag; when eyes refuse to see, and ears to listen. The limbs no longer bear you to the house of prayer. You cared not for your soul in youth and strength. It may be, when you are old, no man will care for *you*—think of your soul—or come to visit you.—*These* are the evil days. Why wait you, then, for *these*? Is it too soon to look to Jesus? Too soon to love the Lord! *When* mean you to begin? “*To-morrow*,” say you? Next week? Next month? Next year?—My Friend, what can the *coffin* do—the *shroud*—the *grave-yard*—or the *tomb*? Say, can the lifeless corpse—the scattered bones—the mouldering dust—can *these* remember their Creator? Can they turn and live? Oh these are evil days *indeed!* Wait you for *these*, my Friend? Whether, or not, you wait for them, *they* wait for *thee!*—Remember thy Creator *now!* Oh seek for grace to find Him—to remember Him.—*What* wait'st thou for? To find a better Saviour, or a kinder Friend? Haste thee; oh, haste! While we are speaking, time is hastening on. The evil days are *coming*. Oh parley not with sin. Away with vain

excuses—with unbelieving doubts. God says, "*Remember thy Creator now.*" Then tarry not, my friend.

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"*Nor the clouds return after rain.*"—ECC. XII. 2.

SAY what are *tears*? Anatomists can solve the question in their way, and give a reason. Still, *what* are tears! *What* makes them flow? *What* keeps the reservoir supplied? *What* keeps it *flowing*? How acts the soul upon the body? *Why* does emotion make me *weep*? What link is there between my *feeling*, and my tears? *Why* weep for *joy*? *Why* weep for *sorrow* too? Ask them who weep the most; the fountain of whose tears is seldom dry. *They* cannot tell. Within them dwells a mystery they cannot solve.—This world is a *vale* of tears. Within its bed there rolls a constant stream of lamentation, mourning, and of woe. How many a streamlet feeds it in its course! Deep furrowed channels bear their burden down. Since Adam's day they have run and ceased not, and all humanity has fed the stream.—Yet 'tis a wonder, seeing *what* man is, that man should weep so *little*, after all; that intervals should be so *long* between his clouds, and rain; that man should have his *sunny* days; his summer time, when tears are seldom known.—'Tis of God's mercy, thus to mitigate the curse; and give a little respite to our tears. Sorrow is often sanctified. Yet, of itself, it softens not. Like rain, that oft descends upon a spot, it hardens. Sorrow



unnerves the mind, and thus disables it for action. The more it comes, the more it tells with deadening effect. Thus pressure follows pressure—and the spring recovers not its elasticity. As age advances, causes of woe increase,—friends taken, one by one—leaving the soul more desolate. *Infirmities* increase—painful infirmities—oft, of themselves, the source of tears, and rendering the man less able to endure his *other* sorrows.—Thus weakness, desolation, pain—and *strange forebodings of the world to come*—harass the aged mind. Cloud follows cloud across their sky; one shower is scarcely gone, before another comes. The mind—unnerved and full of discontent—rejects all comfort, or for life, or death. These are the *evil* days! Oh, *wait not* for them! Pray that thy early tears be sanctified, that later tears may be restrained. *One* only remedy there is for sin—*one* only antidote to sorrow—THE CROSS OF CHRIST. Shed *there* thy tears for *sin*; He'll wipe away thy tears of *sorrow*. There tears of penitence are turned to tears of *joy*—and all thy tears are written in his book. (Psa. lvi. 8.)

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“*And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.*”—ECCLES. XII. 4.

“DAUGHTERS of music!” *Once* they were there in power—his soul the very seat of melody. How fine his taste! How exquisite his skill! What rare perception of sweet sounds! Alas! how changed! And yet the *soul* of music is

there—only its *power* is gone. The man remembers what was *in* him; but cannot give it utterance. He lives on days gone by, on days *for ever* gone. New melody is nought to *him*. New melody—the progeny of modern days, the taste of younger souls. No ear is left to take it in. The echo of the *past* is there, and fills his languid soul.—The sons of *painting* once were there, and filled his mind with imagery. Science, accomplishment, and art, were *his*, and cast their shadows o'er him *still*; while energies, gone by, play with a flickering flame, and light his drooping sensibilities.—His *eye*—that window of the soul—how keen it was! What floods of light it once admitted; filling the inward parts with rare perceptions; feeding the thoughts; making the soul aware of what was passing; giving to outward things an inward place, and habitation; the man thus kept in intercourse with all material things.—The soul looked *out*, as well as light looked *in*—and spoke unutterable things. But *now* the medium is thickened, glazed, and seared. Light enters scantily, and leaves its information lagging far behind. If aught is felt, 'tis vacancy—the sense that *once* 'twas otherwise—grasping what once was there, and finding nought.—The *hearing*—once so fine—hears now the knell of its departure, and strains what *once* was power—but *now* is power no more.—A soul, thus furnished with a fleshly frame was fed (how passing strange!) and kept in action—by material food, by meat and drink, and other carnal things. No meat, no strength.

—no energy of soul or body.—*Within the house the food was bruised, and ground. The “grinders” did their work in harmony with all the structure. But now the workshop is bare—the mill well nigh forsaken. As once it told of power, so now it tells of power lost, and gone.*—Behold, my friend, what once may be *thy* portrait! Say, are these *evil days*, or not? The days to seek, the days to *find*, a Saviour? Oh, trust them not. Themselves are eloquent, and say, “Beware!”—If learning, taste, and eloquence, be thine, can they be lost by giving them to God? Can genius be *dishonoured* at the shrine of Him, who gave it? And *yet*, left to themselves, what will thine elegance—thy taste—thy genius do? They cannot rescue thee from pining age. How can they rescue thee from wrath to come?

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“*The grasshopper shall be a burden.*”—ECCL. XII. 5.

ALAS, how changed! Is *that* the man, who smiled at danger; who stood the battle's brunt, and faced a multitude alone? Is *that* the man, whose spirit bore him o'er the stormy wave; whose brawny arm, and stedfast heart set trouble at defiance? Say, *what* has changed him? Nought but the *lapse of years*!—But *what* is changed? The *spirit* is still the *same*. No age affects the *soul*—it knows of no decay; and yet the *body* knows no *fear*, anxiety, or care. It is the *soul*, that feels these things. Not for itself it feels them, but for its fleshly home. It shrinks; it quivers;

sighs, and starts—in sympathetic tune; sustains the burdens; fears the fears; mourns with the sorrows, of the flesh. Such are the workings of our fallen nature, and such their influence on the soul. Yet none can look within, and trace the process—how boldness turns to fear—rashness to caution—the power of enterprise, to love of rest.—*Rest* is the luxury of age—sweet, soothing rest—as much a luxury to age, as enterprise to youth. But say, *what* works the change? How strange that vital energy should thus decay! How comes it that vigour grows—lives but a short maturity—and then decays! *How* were the seeds of living dissolution thus planted in the frame? How twined, in dormant properties, with fallen nature?—“*The grasshopper is a burden!*” Its very chirp a trouble! Its “spring”—the subject of alarm! Its shadow terrifies the soul!—These are *the evil days*, when sad decay is the burden of the song—when man feels boneless; bloodless; lifeless; when all his pith is gone—his frame a chaos of infirmity; his steps—his breath—his powers—his vision—all bathed in impotency—and weakness seems to start from every pore; when man could cry for very weariness, nought but the ghost of what he was before! He dreams of days gone by, uncertain which is true, the past, or present. The past is a *spectre*—the present nothing more. The *future*! Ah! the future! Is that a spectre too? It must be so—airy in prospect (but in reality how fearfully substantial!), unless the soul has found the sure realities of faith, and

grace—built on the solid rock of Truth. Thus born again, the soul retains its freshness—and though it feels the bodily decay, and pays its tribute to the “fall,” it has a *principle* within—a principle of life—and endless youth; a principle that soars o’er mind, and flesh alike—preserves from fear, and puling fretfulness, and new creates the man. .

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“*Man goeth to his long home.*”—ECCL. XII. 5.

“His *long*,” but not his final *home*,—there is *another* home beyond. For *some* this home is long indeed—yea passing long. To *some* it has been a home more than five thousand years—as with righteous Abel. *What* earthly tenement can boast a like duration?—Others have tenanted the home for *centuries*. How long their lease will last is known to no man.—How many have *we* seen borne to this “*home* !” Others will see *us* carried to our home. Reader, they’ll see both thee, and me, except the Lord return in our day. And, if that home receive us, *who* knows how long it will detain us? It may be but an hour, a day, a month, a year. For aught we know (I speak of *possibilities*), it may be twice as long as Adam now has filled it. Known unto God are times and seasons. Can we do more than leave them in His hand? Can we do better than *love* to have it so?—At present all is secret. In due time it shall be known to men and angels.—My Friend, *you* have a home beyond, and so have *I*,—a home prepared and furnished. (John. xiv. 2; Matt.

xxv. 34 ; comp. Matt. xxv. 41.) Do you look beyond the country church-yard, and the peaceful sod ? You *call* it peaceful. But *what peace* for *thee*, if this be all thine expectation ?—Yes, there is a “home” for *all*—a *final* home. *Once* there, you are there *for ever*. Tell me, my Friend, before we part, *what* home do *you* expect to share ? Has it ever crossed your mind, or formed the subject of your serious thought ? Christ has prepared a place for them, that love Him. Say, will your home be *there* ?—*Another* home is prepared. You know its name. Oh ! will your home be *there* ?—You say, “ *Who* knows ? ” I’ll tell you. Where is your *present* home ? Are you at home with *Jesus* ? Do you e’er lean your head upon His breast by faith and prayer ? Say, are your brightest moments spent with *Jesus* ? Is He your confidant, your choicest *Friend* ? If so, *He’ll* be your home for ever. In *Him* you’ll live. In *Him* you’ll rest. In *Him* you’ll sing your song of glory.—Perhaps you say, “ Oh ! this I *wish* to do ; my heart desires to lean upon Him, to find Him all my treasure and my home, though still I mourn my unbelief—my fears.” Fear not, my Friend ! Jesus despises not your small beginnings ; He will be your home at last. But if you are *not* at home with Jesus, nor seek to be so—*what* home have you, my friend ? What home e’en *now* ? What home to look for ? Then *you* are homeless here—and, for all the comfort of your final home, better be homeless still for ever !

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed."—ECCL. XII. 6.

AND was this wondrous building made, just to be taken down? These members knit together, only to be dismembered? These organs tuned, only to be disorganised? The *spinal* frame, with all its silver power—the force that moves, the pillar that sustains, the man—the centre of sensation!—The *head*, so rich with golden influences; the seat of thought; the throne of intellect; the habitation of the brain,—that mystery, which none has understood nor yet explained; the *bowl*, that is filled with golden wine—the essential fluid of all mental action!—The *heart*, with all its vessels, now full, now void; sending its life, with hydrostatic force, to each extremity; suffusing all with warmth, and circulating, as it flows, with healthful energy!—The *lungs*, with turning "*wheel*," now lowering their bucket to the well of ether, now raising it again; supplying breath, and vigour to the frame; sweeping the inner chambers with wondrous ventilation; discharging all that's foul—inhaling all that's pure! Must *these* be broken up? Must all their beauty fade? Must all their power cease? Their very life be turned to death?—*Why* is man's frame thus fading? *Why* lurks within it the essence of decay? Because of *sin*.—But does this undo the mystery? It was not *so* corruptible at first. Man lived nine centuries and more; his frame decayed not—his organs ceased not—till his course was run. And *now*, for ages, the time

has been but *threescore years and ten*, neither increasing nor diminishing. *Why* is it *thus*,—so long before, and now so short? And why not shorter still? *God wills it so*. He has fixed the term of strength, the period of decay. They wax, and wane, obedient to His will.—It seems a mystery why such contrivance should be lost, and perish thus. Each day—each hour—each moment, thousands of souls depart—and leave thousands of wrecks behind; each body thus deserted, e'en in life's lowest dregs, formed of such exquisite machinery, as none but God could make. But *lost* it is not—far from lost. Had Adam's race produced one saint alone, it were not lost. Man's withering frame has been the nursery of *countless* saints. Their faith, their grace, experience, and hope, first found them in a fallen world. *Jesus* they had not known, nor glory seen, had they not dwelled at first in *earthen vessels*. Yet more,—the house is taken down, but to be built again—to last, to be inhabited, *for ever!* Oh, happy they, who have “an house, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. v. 1.)

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“*Then shall the dust return to the earth, as it was.*”—ECCLES. XII. 7.

DUST shall be dust *once more*. Not dust in living flesh—but simply *dust* again, just as it was before. The *spirit* shall return to *God*—to God, who gave it; to God, who breathed it into man at first, Thus spirit goes to spirit, and dust returns to dust—creation's work un-



done, to all appearance, as though it had not been; the union disunited; the harmony made harmony more. Dust claims its dust, and spirit claims its spirit. The two were made to dwell together; but sin has sundered them, and, for a time, impressed on each a separate existence. God gathers to Himself man's spirit and his breath (Job xxxiv. 14); yet not to absorb the spirit in Himself,—not that the soul should lose itself in God, as dust returns to dust. Spirit, once severed from the Master Spirit, must e'er retain its own existence. The breath of God, breathed forth, can ne'er be part of God again. E'en dust, that once contained a living soul, is set apart to harbour it once more.—The soul returns to God,—into the world of spirits,—the world invisible to man, yet visible to God. The soul returns to God,—to God as *Saviour*—or to God as *Judge*; in either case to God. But what a *difference*!—Listen, my friend, oh, listen to the truth; it's solemn, and it's sure. Is God distasteful to you? Love you not His thoughts? Feel you His presence to be dreaded? And *well* you *may*, if now you know Him not. But think,—*What* will it be *at last*? Now you can *seem* to hide yourself from God; God hides Himself from you; and so you are satisfied. But when your naked soul flies shivering away, unclothed by flesh, with nought to shield thee from the living God, ah! *who* can tell the anguish felt by spirit, when thus exposed to Deity! Ah! *who* can tell the pain inflicted by God's all-seeing eye upon the spirit, thus laid bare! And *who* can tell the

bliss, the joy, the rapture of the soul,—the happy soul—the sainted soul—the spirit of the just made perfect! It breathes at last its native air—unmixed with sin—unsullied by temptation. It bathes itself in seas of glory,—the glory of the Saviour's presence. It wings its way into the inmost regions of His love, and sees His face for ever!

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*"Nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given by one shepherd."*—ECCLES. XII. 11.

WORDS spoken by the ministers of truth—words of salvation—messages of grace—brought home with power to the soul! Such are the "*nails*" here spoken of,—lasting impressions; truths fastened in the inner man; God's nature given; the Son of God revealed; repentance, faith, and holiness, imparted; man born again of God.—Christian, remember you the time, when first you knew the Lord? Perhaps you don't—for some receive the truth in tender years, ere thought was well matured; or else the work has been, apparently, so gradual, they cannot fix the epoch of their change. But if you know it, say, can you e'er forget it? The time—the place—the attendant circumstances—the preacher, or the friend, that spoke to you of Jesus,—*what* can efface them from your memory? *What* pluck them from your heart? *Who* can draw out the "*nails*," thus fastened in your soul? And in the after days of grace—in all the workings of experience—in all the growth of knowledge, and exercise of faith, is it not still

the same? Look at your *Bible*! How many texts start up before you, written in type of gold! Why is it *thus*? Each tells you of a season, when first it sensibly impressed your soul. Each is a "*nail*," well fastened there. Some "*master of assemblies*," fastened it,—some brother warrior—some fellow sinner. One taught you *that*—another taught you *this*. One planted you—another watered—many have helped you on your way; and yet "*one Shepherd*" sent them *all*—one Master Shepherd, even *Jesus*! *His* is the grace, the love, the truth. *He* fixed the "*nails*." His hand has sent them home. He gives the Spirit. The work is *His alone*. What *Jesus* does shall never be undone. He drives the "*nails*," and straightway they are clenched; each fastened by the power of His eternal will. He first renews the soul; implants the substance of His grace,—something to hold the "*nails*," when once they are driven in. God's nature in the soul retains the Word, and will not part with it. Hence all the "*perseverance*" of the saints. God loved them—chose them—called them—begat them by His word—and keeps them fast. Each "*nail*" is firm imbedded in the soul, keeping the whole in place, and makes it sure.

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"Of making many books there is no end."—

ECCL. XII. 12.

AND was it so, e'en in the days of *Solomon*, ere modern art was known, and books were multiplied, as now they are? Oh! what would

Solomon have said, had he but seen *a street* in our metropolis, where works by thousands issue from the press? Could he have seen our libraries—shelf upon shelf, groaning with endless tomes,—each year, each month, well nigh each circling day, bringing its contribution to the former store!—We live in days when “reading” must be had. “The schoolmaster is abroad,” and craves fresh matter for his motley crew. The march of intellect prefers its claims. Science advances with such giant strides, that works of yesterday are obsolete to-day, and soon give place to others.—What is true of science—is doubly true of lighter reading. Book chases book across the field of novelty, in ever-changing form. Woe to the clown, that lags behind, and talks of what was new a year ago!—Religion, too, has taken up her pen, and works her types unceasingly. Essays and sermons—works critical and deep—doctrine, experience, and fiction—the Scripture comment, history, and prophetic views,—all claim their authors by the score, and fill the eye.—In such a day we need discretion,—“wisdom” that is useful “to direct,” how much, and *what* to read. The *Word* is overlaid amid the multitude, and suffers loss, e’en among Christian men.—Mayhap it ill becomes *the man*, who is *adding* to the store, to make remarks like *these*! Yet he would make his chapters shorter, and his pages few, that they may interfere the less with Bible hours—and strive that what he writes may point you back to truth, and make you search the Word of God.

more closely.—Reader, whate'er you read, I pray you, make the Word your chiefest study. Take it to God Himself. He wrote it. Who can interpret it like *Him*? Be God Himself your commentary. Read it with thought, and prayer. All that you gather thus will stay with you, as nothing else will stay. None teaches like the Lord the *Spirit*. Believe that He can teach you, and He *will*. The more you trust Him for His teaching, the more He will teach you. The more He teaches you, the less you will care for other teaching. The more your senses thus are exercised, the more you are qualified to judge of other books—to separate the precious from the vile, and thus do honour to the Truth.

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“*Much study is a weariness of the flesh.*”—

ECCL. XII. 12.

STUDY is weariness to flesh; and yet it is not flesh that studies, but the mind. The body is mostly *still* in times of study—yet flesh is wearied; so closely are the soul, and body joined.—Where study is followed to excess, *self* lies beneath it,—self-love—self-pleasing—self-aggrandizement. Where do you find more selfishness than in the “study”—with its book, and pen, and easy chair?—Even in studying the *Word*, 'tis wrong to over do it. Self-seeking meets you *here*. Look back and see. Have you e'er found the Spirit work, when weariness came on? He acts in unison with providential laws. These plainly tell you it is

wrong to over-tax your powers, and ask of them what they can never yield. When aching head, and smarting eyes warned thee to cease, was it not selfishness that urged thee on? Wiser than God thou hast been,—more zealous e'en than He. He bade thee stop. Self said, "I *must* go on." The Spirit said, "I am not with thee." Self said, "I'll go *alone*."—Excess of study is to spirit, as gluttony to flesh. Who thrives by over-feeding? Who gains by over-study? Who can retain knowledge, acquired thus? The sickened mind disgorges it—it's emptier than before.—We over do it from want of faith. We cannot trust the Spirit, either to help our memory, or supply our lack of reading—and so we play the fool by over-study.—My friend, are you preparing for the ministry? Coupled with *this*, you have before you a field of *literary fame*. Why is your strength expended for this *latter* end? Is it to help you for the cure of souls—in preaching Christ—or visiting the poor? Is it for *these* you work your energies? Ah, search again; you will find that *flesh* is working *here*. What has the *Cross* to do with literary fame, and *what* are "*honours*" to the Cross? Has *Jesus* asked it at thine hand? Such carnal weapons are unknown to Christ. You hear it said that fame for learning will aid His cause, and glorify His grace; that men are predisposed to hear a *scholar*, and cease their prejudices, when Christian men have taken high "*degrees*." Believe it not. *Grace* is the only weapon. What other do you find in Scripture? When

Christ is lifted up, all men are drawn to Him. (John xii. 32.) If learning is lifted up, then *self* is lifted; *Christ* is lifted *not*. Then trust it not, my Friend; it will only hinder *thee*, and draw no souls to *Him*.

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“*Fear God and keep his commandments :  
for this is the whole duty of man.*”—  
ECCL. XII. 13.

AND so it always *was*, and so 'twill *ever* be. 'Twas so in *Paradise*. 'Tis so since Adam *fell*. Man's duty shifted not with Adam's innocence. God varied not His law, to suit His rebel, man. The *Gospel* made no difference in *this*. Man's duty must continue still the *same*. This is the reason why he needs a *Saviour*—his duty beats him; he ne'er could do it, and he never will; he needed One to do it *for him*. This is what *Christ* has done. *Believe* in Christ, His doings, then, are *thine*.—“*Fear God!*” My Friend, know you what *this* contains? Who ever feared Him *perfectly*? Have *you*, or *I*? Our fathers—or our kin?—“*Fear God!*” None but a sinless being can accomplish this. Art thou an *angel*? Ah, think it not. Your heart can never fear the Lord.—“*Keep His commandments!*” Who ever kept them? One, *only* One. 'Tis neither you, nor I. 'Twas *Christ*, and He alone.—“*Keep His commandments!*” *Which* have you *kept*? Rather, *which* have you not transgressed? Which day, which hour, have you kept them *all*? Which moment have you fully honoured

one?—"Keep His commandments?" Yes, you may, when you are *perfect*. Say, will this ever be? Perfect in *self*? Ah, never! Perfect in *Christ*? Ah, that is another thing.—"Keep His commandments!" Believe in Christ, and then you have kept them all. None kept in self; not one unkept in *Christ*. All sin in self; all righteousness in *Christ*. In self, God neither loved, nor feared; God honoured, feared, and loved, in *Christ*.—Oh, wondrous scheme! Man saved! God honoured! The Law observed! Atonement made! Man's fall undone by *Man*! Man's penalty discharged by *Man*—the God in man, *Christ Jesus*! Man did it—yet man did it not,—not fallen man.—Thus man is justified, and lives again. Not only so, he is also *willing* made; willing to fear the Lord; willing to keep His law—a willingness he did not feel before. The *principle* is there. The Spirit is there; and hence the *change* of principle—the principle of fear, and strict obedience; the principle of faith; the principle of love! If now he fail,—as fail he often does,—'tis 'gainst his will. In *mind* he keeps it all, although the flesh is weak. He looks for righteousness in Christ, e'en here on *earth*; he looks for perfectness in *heaven*.







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